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THE INFLUENCE OF CHRIST IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

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THE INFLUENCE OF CHRIST IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

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Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant

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NOTE

In this volume the reader will find lectures originally delivered on the Haskell Foundation at Oberlin College. The lecturer likes to recall a happy visit among hosts so kind. For the same reason he would record that students of Yale Divinity School heard the lectures in the Session of 1928–29.

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CONTENTS

I	Introduction	*page* 1
II	Society	20
III	Thought	39
IV	Character	60
V	Life or Death?	81
VI	God	101

I

INTRODUCTION

The proper task and the nature of history men have long debated. In the opening chapters of Thucydides the matter is briefly discussed, with oblique but severe criticism of the greatest historian the world had yet seen. The various books of the great work of Polybius are full of digressions upon the ideal of the historian, and, alas! on the declensions from it that later Greek writers displayed. A few words from the prelude to his first book may form as good an introduction to the task before ourselves as any other. If his predecessors, he begins, had omitted the praise of history, as a discipline for life, he might well undertake the eulogy; but they had been guilty of no such neglect. The very element of unexpectedness—of paradox (to use his own word)—in the events he has to narrate should be enough to incite old and young to read. "Can anyone be so worthless and indolent as not to wish to know by what means and under what polity the Romans in less than fifty-three years have succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their sole government—a thing unique in history?"[1]

So writes Polybius in his first chapter, and he can never get away from his central view that there is reason in history. "The progress of the Romans was

[1] Polybius i, 1.

not due to chance or automatic, as some among the Greeks choose to think."[1] The superiority of the legion to the phalanx was not accidental;[2] the Spanish sword[3] was better than the Gallic sword,[4] and Rome's choice of it was not accident. Indeed Chance leaned the other way; Fortune, he says,[5] strove to save the Greeks, but the folly of their leaders trampled her gifts underfoot. His readers find his promise fairly fulfilled and can realize and understand how and why Rome conquered the world.

Professor J. B. Bury has urged that history is a science; the object at least of every science, however its methods may differ from those of other sciences, is to learn, to interpret and to explain. The historian cannot like the lawyer cross-examine his witnesses, nor like the man of science use test-tube and re-agent, but his purpose is the same. Like the Greek of old he wishes to know and he wishes to understand. In history as in science there is no democracy among facts; all, it is true, have the same right to be understood, but some facts are of vastly more significance than others. The scholar, for whom all facts are of significance and all of equal significance, never understands anything, though Nature is kind to him and conceals from him that there is anything to understand. Conversely, I have heard genius described as the instinct for the fact with meaning, for the real factor; and it is this that every true historian and every real man of science will seek.

[1] Polybius i, 63. [2] Polybius xviii, 26–31.
[3] Polybius vi, 23; xv, 15. [4] Polybius ii, 30, 33.
[5] Polybius xl, 5. Strachan Davidson, in *Hellenica*, 393.

Is it possible to adapt with any profit the question of Polybius and to ask who is so worthless or so indolent as not to care to know how and why Christ captured the world? Or is the bitter sentence of Tertullian still true—that here for once curiosity itself is torpid? Yet I think no section, and no phase, of history can be so significant. If they were moral causes that gave Rome the mastery of the world, a real sense of fact that taught her to develop the legion and to pick the Spanish sword, a real instinct for the factors that counted in a political situation, is it likely to be pure accident that Christ is a more familiar name than Serapis or Mithras? What was it in Christ or in Christianity that beat down Venus and Jupiter, Isis and Osiris, Cybele and Mithras? What is it in Christ and Christianity that is conquering the faiths of a more distant Orient? The two questions are one. Did the Christian faith, or does it yet, win the world because it was or is so like the other religions of the ancient and the modern world, or because it is so different from them?

In the chapters that follow we turn to the ancient world, in which Christianity rose and fought its first battles and won its first victories; but we must not forget the closely parallel story of India, which will enable us, if we take the trouble, to check and to control the results we obtain from the earlier story. The parallel between the Indian Empire and the Roman is amazingly close—tradition, idolatry, ritual, the sense of sin, philosophy, want of nerve, high aspirations, all in fresh and disconcerting contact with a religion of power. But let us look at the ancient

world, and, first of all, consider one or two theses about earlier Christianity of which of late we have all heard a good deal.

Let us begin with the picture of Christ given to us by certain modern students of Apocalyptic writings. Without excessive attention to such questions as more literary critics ask about the sources and construction of the Gospels, they point to parallel passages; they compare the Apocalyptic chapter, the reply to Caiaphas, the account of the Last Judgment, with what they find in Enoch and the rest. They waste little time on the minds of the disciples and their successors; they take these passages as literal and authentic renderings of the mind of the Master; and they draw him anew for us. We are given an amiable figure indeed, gentle, kindly, and full of moral virtues, but hardly of what you could call the intellectual virtues; his head is full of contemporary fancies, of symbols which he mistakes for reality. The critic of Moses and of the Pharisees becomes the victim of the Apocalyptist. He can see his way through Moses' law; he can get at the gist of the marriage and divorce issue, and transcend the food taboos of Jewish traditionalism; but the clouds of heaven are too much for him. He can read God's working in the world and see God's hand in His care for the birds and the colours given to the flower; but when it comes to moral issues he must jog the elbow of God and try to hurry Him. He goes to Jerusalem to be crucified in order to hasten God's plans, in order that without delay God may send him back in triumph on the clouds. And so forth.

To all this, various lines may be taken in reply. One I have suggested already—a closer testing of sources and transmission. Plato used the language, the phrase of the Orphics, and quite clearly hated their ideas of religion and righteousness. If Jesus used the phrase of the Apocalyptist, must he, unlike Plato, have been the innocent victim of the phrase-maker's thought? That is, if he used it at all. Is it not as possible that the disciple missed the thread, lost the point, re-cast, re-modelled and re-translated what he heard, as men have been known to do in later days after a lecture, a sermon, a conversation? Can we suppose any interior harmony in the mind of Jesus? any capacity for comparing one idea with another? Is he in short the sort of person who took to Apocalyptic? Does the style of the Sermon on the Mount, of the parables of the various Sowers, of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan—the style of the controversialist who silenced scribe and Sadducee—of the Master who found his own followers slow in understanding—suggest the manner of any man who ever wrote an Apocalypse? The contrast is that between daylight and nightmare. But we may here take other ground.

If Jesus was another Apocalyptic dreamer, what had he to offer a wide-awake, anxious and disillusioned world that the other Apocalyptic dreamers did not offer it? For it is plain that the world was not interested in Apocalypses at all; there were too many of them altogether, and the world of Horace and Tacitus, of Dio Chrysostom and Dio Cassius, had great traditions of intellectual daylight, which, it is plain, the

early Christians did not ask them to forsake. If Christ had an essentially Apocalyptic mind, it is plain that his early followers did not share it. It was precisely the non-Apocalyptic features of Christ's thinking that appealed to the world. As Mr R. T. Herford has well said, the Apocalyptists used the language of hope, but their thoughts were of despair. There is no despair in Christ's mind, and no sense of hurry, no nervous jogging of the Father's elbow. Whatever the first Jewish followers handed on of Apocalyptic to their converts, it was to more real things that those converts responded. Long before the whole world was won, the Last Things and the Second Advent had a secondary place; they had become pictures of a final victory; they were not munitions of war. It was other things that conquered the world for the Galilaean.

St Paul in his turn has been re-modelled into a thorough-going Sacramentarian and his Gospel into something in essence very like a Mystery religion, with "Jesus the centre of a cult offering private salvation".[1] The reconstruction depends on two assumptions—one, that we really know the dates of the documents on which we depend for knowledge of the Mystery cults, and the other, that St Paul, Jew as he was, looked wistfully over the fence (as it has been put), freely re-modelled the Christian tradition, and carried his predecessors and their friends with him. But once again the epistles, if read with any sense of proportion and perspective, do not suggest the Mystery documents. Paul's mind, as Professor

[1] K. Lake, *Landmarks*, p. 70.

Gilbert Murray himself puts it,[1] "for all its vehement mysticism, has something of that clean antiseptic quality that makes such early Christian works as the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix and the Epistle to Diognetus so infinitely refreshing. He is certainly one of the great figures in Greek literature". Probably no one, who knew the difference between one book and another, would call the writers of the Mystery books great figures, antiseptic or refreshing.[2] On the other hand the question is raised and admirably discussed by Mr Edwyn Bevan, whether Christianity and Gnosticism fitted to Jesus of Nazareth the conception of a Redeemer older than Christianity, which had originally nothing to do with him; or whether the Gnostics, with Jesus before them, introduced a Redeemer into a scheme which originally had none. He concludes that the figure of a personal Redeemer was not an original part of Hellenistic theology, and that no real parallel in current paganism has been discovered to the belief in the Divine One taking on him for love of men the form of a servant. He adds that there is no Redeemer in the Hermetic literature or in the system of Posidonius.[3] Even the word "Saviour" comes late and slowly into the New Testament and Christian speech.

But there is another question here. If the Mystery cults held the place in modern times assigned to them in the old religion of the Mediterranean world, why

[1] Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 199.

[2] See the vigorous page of Dean Inge, in *The Legacy of Greece*, p. 52: "Paul's antipathy to ritual in every shape is stamped upon all his writings".

[3] Edwyn Bevan, *Hellenism and Christianity*, Essay V on the Gnostic Redeemer, pp. 95, 106.

did the Christian apologists in the main let them alone? And, a more serious problem, how did the new cult make its way among them with its miserable start? That Jesus was shamefully crucified was trumpeted everywhere by the opponents in taunt and caricature; that he rose from the dead was the statement of the struggling sect. Why, if he were what was claimed, did he not spontaneously vanish from the cross in the sight of all men, asked Celsus.[1] For a Mystery religion the start was a bad one. How such things were started, we can read in Lucian's account of the impostor Alexander. Once again, a comparison of Paul's epistles to the Corinthians with the last book of Apuleius' *Golden Ass* will suggest other handicaps. The Christian did not "drink out of a cymbal and eat out of a tambourine". Paul and Pliny between them sketch something far more like a village chapel —all the procedure simple and commonplace, and unimpressive every way apart from the story of Jesus. The village chapel of course is modelled on Paul's epistles, and the successors of the Mystery religions must be sought elsewhere, and they, too, are easily found. As a Mystery religion Christianity made a bad start, and, even if it be allowed that as a Mystery religion it eclipsed the rest, early Christian literature emphasizes quite other things than the adherents of the cults proclaimed and practised. It seems reasonable to conclude that in the two crucial centuries the Christian religion made its war on another line of appeal, and that it had a richer and stronger content than the Mystery religions.

[1] Celsus *ap.* Origen, *c. Celsum*, ii, 68.

The miracles of Jesus used to play a great part in apologetic, but the educated world of the early Roman Empire had as solid a contempt for miracle as the rationalists of the opening days of the modern scientific movement. Ordinary quacks, according to Celsus, could be seen in the streets doing greater miracles than those of Jesus, "driving devils out of men and blowing away diseases, calling up the souls of heroes and displaying sumptuous banquets, with sweetmeats and dainties that are not there"—are they also to be called "Sons of God"?[1] Tertullian admits the inadequacy of proof from miracles apart from the fulfilment of prophecy, and quite readily concedes the skill of the conjurers in the streets.

The argument from the fulfilment of prophecy appealed only to those who knew the Old Testament and were content to set on it the valuation of the early Christians and to accept their canons of interpretation. But the Jews were at hand to prove that Isaiah never prophesied in Hebrew that a *virgin* should bear a son; and pagans, quite familiar with the allegoric method, said the Christian allegories were more disgraceful and absurd than the myths they allegorized, that they made riddles of what was perfectly plain in Moses, and that the Christians cheated their own critical faculty.[2] The allegoric method with its types may have some value for those who accept it, but it is hard to deny here that pagan criticism was justified.

Yet Christianity did capture the ancient world. Wilamowitz says it did so because, of the religions in competition, it most successfully Hellenized itself. The

[1] Celsus, *ib.* i, 68. [2] So says Celsus.

phrase by itself is not very clear; but if I may put on it my own interpretation of the word Hellenism, I think it gives us a real clue. What was Hellenism? Surely the progressive development of the mind to Athenian standards. If we may turn the Greek word into something more like ordinary English, Christianity triumphed because it squared best with the world's best intelligence, because essentially it liberated the human mind and gave it a chance to develop to the full range of God's conception for it. We can admit that; and we can add that the Christian learnt somehow to be quicker in recognizing new facts than the ordinary Hellenist was, and that he found some signal factors in life that his neighbours and his ancestors had missed. That is my thesis in these pages and it can be summed up very largely in a phrase of St Paul's—where the spirit of the Lord, i.e. of Jesus, is, there is liberty. This is not to assert that early Christians, or even modern Christians, achieved all the freedom to which they are entitled, or that they did not, and do not, lose the habit of freedom of mind, that they do not get frightened and compromise between God's future and their own past. But I propose to maintain that Jesus came to the world as a liberating force, at once in virtue of the factors he was to teach men to recognize and of the personality that he was. We shall have to deal more particularly with various phases of the human mind and the life it worked out for itself in that age, and with the reaction of Jesus upon each phase in turn.

But first let us recall the larger outlines of that world. In a few pages not even a modern traveller

could give a complete account of so simple a continent as America, and the old Mediterranean world was as complex, intricate and evasive as India.

It was the world of the Roman Empire. Modern popular notions associate Rome with war and conquest. Certainly Rome conquered the Mediterranean area, but the inhabitants of the conquered lands more and more associated Rome with peace. Probably those lands have never seen three centuries of such uniform and regular peace as followed the victory of Augustus. Virgil the Roman tells his fellow-citizens that Heaven itself ordains peace as their gift to mankind; Greece might give art and eloquence; Rome's contribution should be peace. And it was. Epictetus the Greek Stoic emphasizes the value of the Roman gift of peace. Pliny the naturalist writes of the great gains to botanical knowledge from the peace and freedom of travel that Rome gave. Her rule was not oppressive. It was indeed, according to George Finlay, generally viewed with satisfaction by the Greeks, who counted the disappearance of the many small governments among their people a necessary step toward the improvement of their condition. Anyone who will read Mr Charlesworth's *Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire* will get a new light upon Roman conceptions of government. Rome reckoned upon using the laws and constitutions of the peoples she conquered—or rather upon allowing them to use them for themselves. That her record is free from blots, no one with even a casual acquaintance with the Classics would maintain, but probably, the more

casual his acquaintance, the more apt he would be to emphasize the blots.

Many things were missed by the Roman administrator. He had not the acquaintance with economic laws and their workings, which we might expect (if we rarely in fact find it) in a modern government. He handled money badly; his employment of slave labour tended to unproductive use of the soil, to a cessation of improvement in tool or process, and at last to a decline in arts and industries, which left nothing as a rule to export to the Orient except the precious metals, with the result of a great impoverishment of the Western World. Silks, flavours, and wild beasts for the arena were unprofitable commodities for which to barter wealth. But the Roman was not really the world's tutor in extravagance and unsound economics, he was a *nouveau riche* who learnt these bad ways from princes whose wealth was older. And in any case the Roman Empire "was the greatest experiment in Free Trade and Home Rule that the world has yet had".[1]

The Roman government was good—better at all events than any government the Mediterranean world had ever had. The Persian rule was better than one might at first suppose; even the Assyrian, as we learn of late, did something for culture—a good deal, to be truthful. But Roman government was better than either; it was wiser, firmer, more calculable and more obviously permanent. It was in fact too good. In every efficient person there lurks in germ an official, and in every official, in a stage far beyond the germ,

[1] F. Haverfield, *Study of Ancient History in Oxford*, p. 28.

lurks the Autocrat. Rome's government became more and more centralized, official and bureau meant more and more with time. The second century A.D. —the century when the great strides of Christianity were made—was perhaps the period when a greater proportion of the civilized world had a better government than at any other time. Professor Bury cruelly suggests that the age was the ideal of utilitarians rather than of thinkers. Mr Bernard Henderson, in his study of Hadrian, is still more caustic—"on the horizon of efficiency there is always brooding the black cloud of bureaucracy. Hadrian had a passion for efficiency. That the bureaucracy, that greatest of curses, began to multiply under him is clear. It was the beginning of the heyday for Officialdom under the early Empire".[1]

But this did not so far alter the fact that Rome gave the world her greatest boon—the opportunity in centuries of peace to assimilate the culture of Greece; and the assimilation of culture is neither a quick nor an easy business. Alexander had designed that the world should share the gains of all the centuries, and that Greek art and Greek thought should unite mankind in a higher life. To that ideal his successors had been fitfully true, and some of them had done much to help it forward. Rome as the last heir of Alexander had made the world one in government and in peace; it remained to make it one in culture. Much was done for this by the Imperial rulers, but they came too late; the Orient had begun to speak with an insidious appeal. But let us look first at the aims and ideals of Alexander.

[1] B. W. Henderson, *Life and Principate of Hadrian*, p. 63.

For the ancients as for us Greece spoke most clearly to the world in Athens. Our city, said Pericles, in the old days, is the education of Greece;[1] and in the later days Antigonus Gonatas called Athens "the beacon tower of the world".[2] The grave rebuke of Polybius says the same thing[3]—"The man who imagines that all Greeks ought to have their eyes fixed upon Athens, on pain of being called traitors, seems to me to be ill informed and under a delusion". It was after all in Athens that the Greek mind first grew conscious of that sense of power which peculiarly marks it. Greeks in Asia Minor, in the islands, even in Boeotia, had contributed to the growth of this sense—the sailor who discovered Spain, the soldier who fought under Nebuchadrezzar, the dealers in Egypt, the philosophers and the poets had all been revealing what the human mind could do. Whatever else is true, it is true that the triumph over the Persian was the glory of Athens, and in her all the endowments of the mind reached a freedom and a development that changed for ever the meaning, the associations, and the suggestiveness of the name of Hellas. In art and literature, in war and philosophy, in government, in everything save religion Athens gave new thoughts and new hopes to mankind, and thereafter man or city counted in the degree of their loyalty to the ideals of Athens.

It was this sense of the greatness of the human mind, this consciousness of ideals, that Alexander took with him into Asia, and saved them by so doing.

[1] Thucydides ii, 41. [2] Plutarch, *Demetrius*, 8.
[3] Polybius xviii, 14.

For Greece had begun to slow down, to think more of her past than of her future, to be more pleased with her ancestry and her blood than befits the pioneers of mankind. Alexander did for the Greeks what those great ancestors had done—he took them out into a new world, a world which was a unity as it never had been before, which geographically, economically, intellectually was to be one. Greek cities, Greek life and Greek ideas marked his way from Alexandria to Kandahar. The barbarian in Bactria coined his gold with a Greek image and a Greek superscription. Westward the Greek man of science crossed Gaul and circumnavigated Britain. The stars and the world were mapped by Greeks, and the tides hitched to the moon. Asoka the Buddhist King in Northern India sent his missionaries to the Kings of the West, Tulamaya and Amtikina, whom the Greeks called Ptolemy and Antigonus. As for the spread of Greek culture, here is an epitaph that an old man wrote for himself in Greek couplets:

> Island Tyre was my nurse: Gadara, an Attic city amid Assyrians, gave me birth. Of Eucrates I sprang, I, Meleager, the companion of the Muses, who have run side by side with the Graces of Menippus. And if I am a Syrian, what wonder? All of us, O stranger, dwell in one mother-land, the Cosmos; one Chaos brought all mortals to birth. Far on in years I wrote this on my tablets before burial, for old age and death are near neighbours. But speak thou a word to wish me well, old and talkative as I am, and so mayst thou too reach a talkative old age.[1]

Geography, science, literature, scholarship—they all flourished where Alexander trod. Did he not himself sail down the Indus and carry Homer with

[1] *Anth. Palat.* vii, 417.

him to read wherever he camped? His work lasted till Islam swept over the lands he conquered, and it was in the cities that he and his successors founded or re-founded that it throve most aptly. Alexandria is an epitome of all he did. Here the Macedonian ruled the Egyptian, and the sacred stories of the Nile and the sacred books of Judaea were translated into Greek and became the possessions of the world. Here commerce found its greatest centre, here was the Museum of Ptolemy, here were the most learned scholars and the most flippant worldlings of every generation, in a city of pageants and street-lamps, of ships and books. Greek literature took on new tones and colours at Alexandria, scholarship and science became exact, and the history of the world's religion was shaped for ever. Nothing could reach Alexandria and remain provincial. Judaism was transformed here, learnt new thoughts, spoke a new language in prose and poetry, and prepared the way for Christianity. The new religion itself felt the influence of the universal city, it too learnt the new language, the greatest speech of man, and was able thereafter to put the greatest thoughts that had reached mankind in words that hid less of their reach and wonder.

"What is Greece? How do you define it?"[1] asked Philip V, the king, who "lived the life of the wolf".[2] The answer is, wherever men thought and felt with eyes and hearts open, wherever they lived the human life and knew it.

It was three hundred years and more between the death of Alexander and the birth of Christ, and they

[1] Polybius xviii, 5. [2] Polybius xvi, 24.

were not all years of gain. If it was new life that Alexander gave with new homes to Greek genius, something was lost. For centuries the city had been the nidus of the Greek spirit, and it is more and more clear that genius above all else must have a nidus. The prophet crying in the wilderness has often been a blessing to men, but his notes are apt to be few and thin. It is in the busy hum of men, against the strong human background that genius thrives; it must have incarnation, a tradition and an environment to do anything. The world is a great place for genius, but a poor home. It is not every plant that remains the same on a new soil. Alexandria gave a man a new world-view-point –if I may use a modern Alexandrinism—which is a good thing for genius to have. But the soul wants more than a world-view-point; it wants the consciousness of a people, a tradition. Halicarnassus and Athens are better places to start from, better places to carry in one's heart. The loss of the city state saved Greeks from a great deal of small and foolish war, but it left the individual Greek very much detached, very sadly abridged, and with a stronger bent for individualism than art will stand. The universe became the abode of the Greek as Meleager hints in his epitaph, and it is a very splendid and noble heritage, a magnificent club, but no sort of a home.

The Greek grew lonely in his new great world.

> The world is so big and I am so small—
> I do not like it at all, at all.

If R. L. Stevenson struck this couplet out of his *Child's Garden of Verses*, it still represents a real mood of man,

if not of childhood; and it pictures the frame of mind to which the Greek came in the grand new world that Alexander opened to him. He was a long long way from Colonus or Acharnae, and what had been the great stimulus of his life was cut away from him. There was no city life, no neighbourhood with its quarrels and friendships and associations; it was more like life on a great liner. Of course you can have quarrels on the *Mauretania* or in Alexandria, but they are not the same—they are sour not fierce; and on the other hand the friendships are not the same; and you have no hand in steering the ship, not even in ordering the dinner; a fishing boat is more like real life. So the Greek grew very solitary and uneasy, and it is seen in all he does and thinks.

Polybius is quite explicit about the practice of race suicide among the Greeks of his day[1]—a sure sign of that "loss of nerve" which Professor Bury notes as the mark of that age. In old days there had been faith in the world—lots of room in it and plenty to do for all the children you could have, and the Greek had them, and planted Sicily and the shores of the Black Sea with them. Who would or could write poetry on a liner? Without the real people to share it with? Men compiled dictionaries; you need no heart nor home for that; but literature died down on the alien soil. A man by himself has little freedom of mind. The immigrant is not quite a whole man; he can make money in the new land and give the people new ideas; but he misses his mother and his God, and the American wife or the Hellenized Egyptian wife is

[1] Polybius xxxvi, 17.

no substitute for either. Men were scattered and solitary in that great world—units cut off from home and friendship, they lost faith and nerve. The government was good, but they had no hand in it. Kings rose and fell, kingdoms were made and dissolved, and it was no affair of theirs; they looked on and wondered. There seemed so little reason in this great world of space and change; and they lost faith in reason and believed more and more in Chance or cast-iron Destiny—two different things, an antithesis. No man can believe in both at once, but they did. And the Oriental wives and neighbours talked of new and non-Hellenic gods, and perhaps might be right; how could you tell? And there were "the clouds in the West".[1]

So genius declined; and the Roman came and conquered, and governed too well. Life grew more and more of a riddle, and solitary hearts lost faith and lost nerve, and begot no songs and few children—weary of old books and old culture, afraid of new gods, of Chance, of Fate, of the stars above and the world beyond. A new impulse was needed, a new Athens with her sense of power, or a new Alexander with his faith in man and the world—something or other to re-hearten men—a new liberty in the universe, a Liberator.

[1] Polybius v, 104.

II

SOCIETY

The battle of Salamis marks an epoch in human history as much as in the story of Greece. There lay the great dividing line in experience and in consciousness—the West had beaten the East, the city state had foiled the great Empire, liberty was to be the keynote of European life for ever. In the play of Aeschylus, in the History of Herodotus, the story is immortal. The past was past, a new beginning was made; men entered upon a new world with a new feeling, a new mind, a new outlook, above all with a new sense of power.

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive.
> But to be young was very Heaven.

There was nothing that the free spirit of man could not attempt and achieve. As we saw, he had mastered the Mediterranean with its winds and currents, all the dour menace of the shore with rock and shoal, and the shifting treachery of the sea in all its moods. The stars were with the mariner, and he used them too for his purpose. The thinker meanwhile had been exploring the secrets of Nature, guessing aptly the explanation of many of her doings, and wondering how the first began. At last in the sea-fight and then on the field of battle Greece had shown that she could act as well as think; and the great age of Greece began.

A great age it was indeed—outstanding still among

those periods when the mind of man has been most alive. It was creative. It gave the world ideals that still eclipse our efforts. Many things have been done by later men, which the man of Periclean Athens could not have done, but a large proportion of these things they might not have thought worth the doing. Shakespeare's age could not have built Brooklyn bridge or harnessed Niagara, but it is questionable whether men outside these neighbourhoods might not prefer *Hamlet* or *As You Like It* to either of these achievements. It seems a greater thing to make something that never grows old than to achieve a piece of ingenuity, wonderful indeed, that grows stale and is soon outdone. In art and literature Athens achieved the eternal, not merely in the sense that it lasts for ever, but that for ever it inspires and creates. So it was in philosophy, and so it was in government.

You will look far for a truer or nobler picture of the ideals of Democracy than you find in the speech of Pericles that Thucydides records, or re-creates. There is drawn a world where there is free room for the fullest life of man. Others have praised the good citizen ready in tax-paying, loyal to magistrates, benevolent in the endowment of national institutions, and quick to volunteer in the service that leads to death. Athens, according to her statesman, asked more of her sons, and she assuredly had it of them. They became her lovers, as he put it, loving her with a passion that only beauty wakes—loving the ideal city they dreamed of, loving the actual city they saw, and consecrating to her all the new impulses in art, poetry, music, sculpture, thought and daring that their new

age, their new sense of power, waked in them. They believed in Athens and they believed in themselves and in one another. They looked for the utmost development of every citizen in his own way, they believed in the individual man, and urged him to cultivate and then to dedicate his individuality to the Commonwealth. Men did this, to a quite surprising degree, and Athens was strong in the abundance of her significant personalities. Life was humanized through and through, and common men came to feel the grandeur of Aeschylus and of Pheidias, to enjoy the wit and the literary grace of Aristophanes, to enter into the high thoughts of Pericles. There is a unity in the age and the people, an integrity (as it has been called) about the citizens; they are whole men, and not decimals, able all of them, in degree or at least in ideal, like their poet, to "see life steadily, and see it whole". No society could seem further from our modern Mutt and Jeff culture and our Lloyd George democracy.

Yet to something more like the types we know that great world came. A century or less after Pericles, Isocrates laments a false conception of Equality—the "equality of the unequal", a republic of the third-rate, a state of common men of vulgar minds and poor ideals, heirs of a great inheritance, not creators, heirs who traded in the names and arts and culture of their predecessors. The world is never very grateful to pessimists—often because it knows they are right, for diagnosis of a sort is easier than sound prescription in social troubles. If Plato and Xenophon wrote in the fourth century, they grew up in the fifth, and with

them and with Isocrates, the originator of the world's sole system of training in culture, the creativeness of Athens halted. Democracy and the thinking classes parted company; there was no more an Athenian empire, and gradually Athens sank into being a provincial town with a university, where tradition and criticism took the place of creation, a resort of students and tourists.

Why is it, we ask, that we must speak of great periods in the history of our race? Why is it that progress comes incalculably, in wild spasms of creation and power, and then there succeed dead ages that seem to do nothing but echo and whose only contribution is to posterity, if they make any at all, is the transmission of what they receive?

The creation of the city state was the achievement of Greece; and the city state cut its own throat and ruined Greece. One city state fought the other; one after another aspired to rule the rest; all in turn wrecked themselves in wild hopes, or sold themselves for a foreigner's subsidy, or simply lapsed into virtual non-entity. Persia bought the race that beat her in battle, and Macedon conquered both Greece and Persia. To the very last the ambition prevailed for absolute independence, and neighbours were still fighting neighbours with the well-worn watchwords of the past upon their lips, when Rome overthrew the last Macedonian, and after a brief interval made a province of Greece.

Are we to say that Greece broke down upon fixed ideas? For centuries the Greek lived in a city of his own, each city often parted from its neighbours by

barriers of mountain and sea. There was little or no challenge to this conception of a separated city life in extreme independence of all others. Lydia was no menace to the Greeks, apart from those in her neighbourhood. Though the Persian came with all the evidence of a great and universal empire, Greece would never believe it, except in the tremendous year of Xerxes' expedition, and when that was once over and the Great King driven back, Greece forgot and would realize no more that there could be such a thing as a universal empire. A fixed conception of one form of government was her ruin. Inside the cities themselves it was the same passion for independence that undid them. Independence is a great thing, but a depraved sense of equality is not the way that leads to it, as Greece found to her cost.

Other things were as fixed in the Greek mind. Dr Verrall once wrote that one of the chief diseases of which ancient civilization died was a low idea of woman. A few illustrations will serve. Pericles tells the widows of the Athenian soldiers, that "for a woman not to show more weakness than is natural to her sex is a great glory, and not to be talked about for good or for evil".[1] "Silence", says Sophocles in his *Ajax*,[2] "is woman's glory", and Aristotle adds "but not equally the glory of man".[3] From the exhibition of the girl tumbler among the swords Socrates and his friends, we read, conclude that courage may be a woman's gift too.[4] Aristophanes might be quoted as showing how men thought of women, if comedy is

[1] Thucydides ii, 45.
[2] Sophocles, *Ajax*, 293.
[3] Aristotle, *Politics*, i, 13, 11.
[4] Xenophon, *Symposium*.

evidence for the actual—his plays are full of allusions to the *Hausfrau* life, the baby, the Thracian "slavey", the cookery, the secret drinking, the victimizing of the husband, and other things still worse. The commonplace Apollodorus offers it as an axiom to a popular court, which probably argued with him, that "courtesans are kept for pleasure, concubines for comfort, and wives for the production of legitimate children and in order to have a reliable guard of one's possessions".[1] It may all be true, but it does not seem as if the catalogue of woman's uses and faculties were quite exhaustive. Xenophon sketches another ideal in the story he tells of how the grave and tidy Ischomachus trains the raw but nice little girl he has married. Even Aristophanes once or twice as if by accident puts on his stage a woman capable of broad outlook and far-reaching plans—but perhaps that was comedy too. The age of the Successors of Alexander showed the Greeks great princesses, women of another make altogether from the worrying wives of Athens. In Euripides' plays great women are drawn, for Euripides believed in woman's nature, like the strange pioneer he was. But, in general, the question put by Socrates to the Athenian would meet only one answer: "Is there anybody to whom you entrust more serious matters than to your wife—or to whom you talk less?"[2] But to the end the evil Herondas and the genial Theocritus suggest that the average Greek woman remained a poor creature.

General rules have always their exceptions, but broadly the evidence suggests that Verrall was not far

[1] *In Neaeram*, 122. [2] Xenophon, *Oecon.* 3, 12.

wrong. What was true of Greece, was probably in degree true of her neighbours Eastward. The Roman woman was in better standing, but the Roman moralist pointed over the frontiers to the Germans for a greater type of woman; and the satirist, if he is ever to be trusted, and the elegiac poet suggest that Roman standards of woman's capabilities were not very high. At the end of the second century Celsus, writing in Greek, though I am not sure of what part of the Empire, complains that it was through the women that Christian superstition crept into honest houses, as earlier writers had complained with regard to other Eastern cults.

All through antiquity we have to remember that, except in the very early periods, or in regions of comparative poverty, industry depended on slave labour. At one point in the Peloponnesian War (413 B.C.) when the Spartans had fortified a post on Attic soil, Thucydides[1] tells us that "the sufferings of the Athenians were terrible. For they were dispossessed of their entire territory, and more than twenty thousand slaves had deserted, a large proportion of them artisans". Similarly, in the next year, when Athens sent an army to Chios, most of the slaves deserted to the Athenians; for "the Chians had more slaves than any other state except Sparta, and their offences were always more severely punished because of their number".[2] The historian does not linger over the sufferings of the slaves, and his reminder of Sparta and her slaves recalls the horrible treatment meted out to the helots or serfs under the system of Lycurgus—

[1] Thucydides vii, 27. [2] Thucydides viii, 40.

"most of the Spartan institutions were constituted with a view to guarding against the helots". An annual proclamation of war on the farm labourers would seem an extreme step in a civilized state; it was necessary in Sparta with fifteen helots to one citizen and gods who disapproved of murder but allowed war.

Mr W. E. Heitland, the historian of Rome, published some years ago (in 1921) a very remarkable study of agricultural labour in antiquity. He pursued his subject through all available Greek and Roman literature down to the fifth century A.D. Slavery, as he shows, infests the life of the people and the minds of the philosophers. Plato in his *Laws*, his "second-best Utopia", builds the fabric of civilization on the basis of slavery. Virgil in his *Georgics* avoids the slave question, which, as Horace and Livy show, lay at his door. Every historian can recall the huge enslavements of foreign populations by Sulla and other conquerors, the 10,000 slaves landed, sold and re-shipped in a day at Delos,[1] and the slave wars in Italy and Sicily. Mr Heitland traces the sequel. Rome flourished as a city exceedingly, but when the wars of conquest were over, when peace came with the Empire and the constant supply of ever-new slaves produced by every campaign ceased almost for ever, it became a problem more and more acute to find the labour to get the world's food out of the ground. Slavery had headed free men from manual work in contempt; war had trained them to disdain a farmer's life; grazing lands had replaced small farming; every-

[1] So says Strabo.

thing rested on slavery, and it began to fail, as the emphasis on slave-breeding shows. The difficulties of Augustus and still more those of Marcus Aurelius, in a world depleted, sick and poor, menaced by sturdy and healthy invaders, grow very vivid for Mr Heitland's reader. But who was to till the soil? There was nothing for it but to bind the free farmer to the soil as a serf, and his sons with him—the colonate, and the system of compulsory hereditary callings without escape. The plan averted starvation but not decay and the moral decline that must follow the exploitation of the lives and hopes and freedom of other men.

Slavery always kills initiative; why should a slave improve his master's tools or even take care of the tools he has? To turn men and women into devils, it is only necessary to enslave them. Negation and sterility beset ancient industry in field and town. Nor was trade really helped by the prodigious wastefulness of some of Alexander's Successors. Waste of material does not advance prosperity. There were Roman nobles who did their best to rival the Successors, and the Orient drew the gold of the West Eastward and sent the Empire toys and trash.

Once more, fixed ideas were ruining the world. There is indeed, as Adam Smith quietly said, "a lot of ruin in a nation", and the Imperial system was well devised to postpone the downfall that came—to postpone it, not to avert it. For its pivotal idea was to save the world by centralization. For a century Roman governors, as some of us know only too well, had shamefully abused their provinces. Cicero found Cilicia still bleeding from the wounds his predecessor

had dealt it, and his letters tell the shameful story of the dealings of the great Brutus with the local senate of Salamis in Cyprus. Senatorial governors were not to be trusted. Self-government was unthinkable for many of the subject lands; it was unfamiliar, outside their experience and their culture. It was not yet the age for representative government, even if distances and illiteracy could have allowed it. The one remedy, not merely for a discordant Italy, but for a world in chaos and disorder, was monarchy.[1] Caesar replaced independent Senators by legates of his own, responsible to himself; and with concessions to the Senate for the sake of appearances and goodwill, Augustus continued his system. The Empire needed a strong central government with some continuity of policy, some fixity of principle and procedure, and above all with a firm hand upon provincial governors, client kings and financial companies. The Republic had made shift with a patchwork constitution full of inconsistencies, compromises, fictions and makeshifts of every kind; the Empire gave the world a system, order, confidence, peace—but at the cost of centralization and bureaucracy.

The most illuminating book to read on Roman government of the world is the collection of letters that Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan, when he was governor of Bithynia in A.D. 111. There were many special circumstances in the story. Two governors within a decade had been prosecuted for bad conduct. The affairs of the semi-independent free Greek cities were in a genuinely Greek state of disorder.

[1] Cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, i, 9.

Unregulated clubs were very turbulent. A number of cities had undertaken great municipal works with fraudulent contractors and incompetent architects. A theatre had been built and had collapsed at Nicaea, and two aqueducts had miscarried at Nicomedeia. What was wanted was honesty. The bitter cry of Pliny for Roman architects instead of Greek shows so much, and his own appointment proves it. Trajan sent him out as a thoroughly honest and reliable man, without experience and with a strong reluctance to do too much on his own initiative. Another governor might not so often have consulted the Emperor. But the frequency of the letters and the comparatively trivial nature of some of the questions illuminate more than the honesty and the nervous conscientiousness of Pliny. He will risk a suggestion now and then, but the responsibility is to be the Emperor's.

To show the spirit and the principles of the Imperial government, I need do no more than quote Mr E. G. Hardy's précis of a letter of Pliny and Trajan's reply.

Pliny to Trajan:

> While I was absent in another part of the province, Nicomedeia was visited with a serious fire, which destroyed many private houses and two public buildings, the Gerusia and the temple of Isis. The fire spread, both owing to the wind and the lethargy of the people, who are said to have remained mere spectators of the disaster. And indeed there are no fire-engines or buckets, and no appliances for extinguishing fires. I have given orders for these to be provided. It is for you to decide whether a *collegium* of firemen should not be formed, not to exceed 150 in number. I will take care that they are *bona fide* firemen, and that their privileges are not used for other purposes. It cannot be hard to watch so small a number.

Trajan to Pliny:

You think that a society (*collegium*) of firemen might be formed at Nicomedeia, as at many other places. But we must remember that your province has been especially disturbed by factions arising from such institutions. Whatever name they bear, it is almost certain that men so united will become a political club. It will be better therefore to supply the necessary apparatus in case of fire, to warn the landlords to take precautions for themselves, and, in case of necessity, to make use of the populace in extinguishing fires.

Add the reply of Trajan as to Amisus:

If the laws of Amisus, depending on a formal treaty, permit the institution of a benefit club (*eranum*), we cannot hinder it, and especially if the contributions are applied not to the furtherance of riotous and illegal assemblies, but to the support of the needy members. In other states (i.e. cities) which are subject to our law these institutions are prohibited.

Let me interpolate a letter written by Synesius of Cyrene to his brother about A.D. 410. It should be explained that barbarian raiders from the interior of N. Africa had developed the habit of swooping suddenly on the province like the Iroquois upon old Canada. They burnt and plundered, and the government offered no real protection against them, so Synesius organized armed self-help and had a warning letter from his brother. Here is his reply:

You are a sweet fellow, to try to stop us organizing an armed force, when the enemy are everywhere and are pillaging everything and killing whole villages together every day, and the soldiers are non-existent so far as one can see. Then you will say it is not legal for private persons to bear arms, will you? and that it is legal for them to be put to death, if the State is angry with the man who tries to save himself? Well, if I gain nothing else, it will be something that the laws rule instead of these fiends. And what value do you think I set on this—to see peace again, an ordinary tribunal, and a court herald calling "Silence"? May I die at once, if only the country recover her former shape and look![1]

[1] Synesius, *Letter* 107.

Small wonder that Trajan will not tolerate a secret Christian society in Bithynia, which refuses to worship the gods or the image of the Emperor, though he proves more lenient than Pliny could have expected.[1]

"You have adopted the proper course, my dear Pliny", he writes. "No general or definite ruling can be laid down. Christians are not to be hunted out, but if brought before you and convicted they must be punished. Those, however, who deny their Christianity and prove their denial by praying to our gods, may wipe out past suspicions and secure a free pardon by their recantation. Anonymous accusations of any kind are inadmissible. They form the worst possible precedent and are contrary to the spirit of our times."

Tertullian, like a good lawyer, points out eighty years later that this rescript is illogical. If Christians were criminals, they ought to be hunted down; if not criminals, why should they be punished? But a civil service prefers its own logic. Trajan's general principles are quite clear, even if here and there he deftly lets sleeping dogs lie, without giving up his law against clubs.

Now a summary of what we have found. Greek democracy betrayed its own ideals, it became divorced from the educated and thinking classes; it elected cheap satisfactions rather than high conceptions; it failed in peace and it collapsed in war. The great kings who succeeded Alexander promised less to mankind; and, though some of them did great service to culture and to human life generally, luxury, inbreeding and irresponsibility ruined one family after another. Under the kings, thinking men, as we saw, lost the old Greek spirit; bullied by Fate or Chance,

[1] Pliny's *Correspondence with Trajan*, 97. See E. T. Merrill, *Essays in Early Christian History*.

in any case by generals and civil servants and raiders, they sank into listlessness and lost nerve. Rome gave them peace but could not restore their energy; and she lost her own, sick of the self-seeking of her own demagogues and military adventurers. "Indifference to the state as if it were no concern of theirs" made men ready to accept the Imperial government; and, as the indifference grew, the civil service rose, and the ancient world declined into bondage and despair. "Do not hope for Plato's Republic", wrote Marcus Aurelius in his diary.[1]

Into all this Christ brought a principle that worked for freedom, and the Roman government knew it—a great deal better than Christ's followers did.

A child's blunder will sometimes hit the truth, and I venture to quote a childish saying and to confirm it by the reasoned policy of a great administrator. "No, Barbara", said the child, "the Bible does *not* end with Timothy; it ends with *Revolutions*." So thought the Marquis Wellesley a hundred years ago—the circulation of the Bible "which taught the doctrine of Christian equality without the safeguard of a Commentary" seemed unsafe in India.[2] So has thought and still thinks the great heir of Rome's civil service. We know what it meant in the American struggle with slavery when men began to refer to a Higher Law, and that was what the Christian very early did. Tertullian lays it down as a principle—*legis injustae honor nullus est.*[3]

[1] Marcus Aurelius ix, 29.

[2] J. C. Marshman, *Carey, Marshman and Ward*, p. 63. Cf. p. 151, Major Scott Waring in 1808 on the danger of having schools in India.

[3] Tertullian, *ad Nationes*, i, 5.

The Gospel had introduced a new and a liberating principle into society. How disturbing it was, Christians partly failed to see and partly did not wish to see. Thoughtful Christians, like other serious people, recognized the immense value of the Roman government, and they sought earnestly to avoid quarrel with the Empire. Paul of Tarsus was a Roman citizen and made friends wherever he could with Roman magistrates—why not? Luke, it is suggested, had in mind, when he wrote the *Acts*, to prove to a government, beginning to be suspicious, that there was no danger to society in the new movement. Let me hastily summarize a few chapters from Tertullian's *Apology* written about A.D. 193.

> As to the Emperor and the charge of high treason against us, Caesar's safety lies not in hands soldered on. We invoke the true God for the Emperor. Even if he persecute us, we are bidden pray for them that persecute us, as you can read in our books which are not hidden, which you often get hold of. We pray for him because the Empire stands between us and the end of the world. We count the Caesars to be God's vice-gerents and swear by their safety (not by their *genius*, as required). As for loyalty, Caesar really is more ours than yours; for it was our God who set him up. It is for his own good, that we refuse to call the Emperor god; Father of his Country is a better title. No Christian has ever made a plot against a Caesar; the famous conspirators and assassins were heathen, one and all. Piety, religion, faith are our best offering of loyalty.

It is a strong case that Tertullian makes. If you look back over the centuries, the Christian religion stabilizes society without sterilizing it.

Yet if the persecuting magistrate had read the *Apocalypse*, he would have found there a note of bitter hatred of that government, by which Paul and Tertullian were prepared to stand. No civil servant

would admit the defence that the government had provoked the hatred by its intermittent habit of burning Christians alive; the administration of existing law is no warrant for anarchical reaction. And again the administrator had a serious complaint; the Christian stood aloof from social and civil life; he was "unprofitable in business"; he did not always wish to serve in the army; he would not undertake the minor local magistracies that had to be filled; he markedly abstained even from being present at public ceremonies; he was in short a thoroughly bad citizen. Even Marcus Aurelius summed up the Christian position as "mere obstinacy", and "theatrical".[1] The attack of Celsus on the Christian religion, written about A.D. 178, ends with an appeal to Christians to drop this attitude and to join in trying to save the Empire, now threatened by desolation within and barbarism without.[2] This charge of withdrawal was a just one, but the Christian defence was that public life and the public service were steeped in idolatrous usage—a magistrate had religious duties, inconsistent with the Christian's renunciation of idols and idolatry.

For three centuries the attitude of the Church was —and indeed had to be—*non possumus*. Christ's conception of life made no direct contribution, and probably no indirect contribution, to Roman law, till after Constantine established the great peace between Empire and Church. By that time the government was sheer despotism and doomed to fall. The Church survived but as an organization, a despotism itself.

[1] Marcus Aurelius xi, 3.
[2] Celsus *ap.* Origen, *c. Celsum*, viii, 67, 68.

Laws were indeed modified in a Christian direction by Christian Emperors; but in the break-up of the Empire and the chaos of a half-barbarian Europe no one could expect to find the true outcome of the work of Christ. Yet as soon as the Renaissance brought back Greek scholarship, and the Reformers began to study in earnest the oldest original documents of the Church, we find the ideas of Christ bearing quite astounding fruit. The first translator of the Greek Testament into English wrote tracts as instinct with essential democracy as Pericles could have done himself; and the New Testament in the hands of "the boy that driveth the plough" warranted in England and in New England all the fears of Lord Wellesley as to what it might effect if translated into Bengali.

But even in the early Roman Empire Jesus Christ proved to be the Liberator of men's minds. He was not like Muhammad a legislator, and therein lay much of his power to liberate. Three phases of his work must suffice here.

First of all, Jesus constantly spoke of the Kingdom of God, a phrase which his Greek followers aptly turned into the City of God. Hebrew or Greek means alike a society based on the fundamental ideas of God—not of man. "You think like a man", said Jesus to Peter on a well-remembered occasion; "you don't think like God." Human society had so far been organized on man's lines, Athenian or Roman; some time it should be re-modelled to square with God's conceptions. This might be effected by a speedy or a far distant second coming of Christ; many people thought so; but perhaps the Church itself was the

City of God. Whatever it should prove, it would be "according to Christ". The world rang with social and racial distinctions; but in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"—"redeemed with the precious blood of Christ". Jewish covenants, Greek democracies, Roman law-books all count; "Philosophy was the pedagogue that brought the Greeks to God as the Law did the Jews"—"but ye are come unto Mount Sion, unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the assembly and festival of the first-born, registered citizens of Heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new dispensation". For anyone who grasped the value of such words there was an alternative to the Roman Empire and the existing order; and the sense of an alternative is freedom.

In the next place, all industry and agriculture in that ancient world, as we saw, depended on slavery or on serfdom. It is remarked that the early Church raised no banner for a servile revolt, made no protest against slavery as either morally or economically unsound, but rather suggested to the slave to be content with his condition. "If you may be free, be satisfied to remain as you are", seems the meaning of St Paul in a well-known context. He does not so much as hint to Philemon to manumit Onesimus; he only asks him to forgive him, to receive him back "not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved", "a bit of my own heart". But when Paul lays down his central principle for dealing with men

—"destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died"—it is the death warrant of slavery, as we know. The end of that iniquity did not come at once; Satan never surrenders at his first defeat; but, as Paul saw, Christ "must reign".

But, finally, look again at Paul's words "for whom Christ died". The New Testament writers do not speak easily of the cross; it was no ornament of pulpit rhetoric then nor of personal decoration; it is even suggested that they do not like to use, except when obliged, even the word *stauros*. Yet they were always conscious of it. What did it mean to them, and to the world then and thereafter, that the best and wisest government mankind had seen could not contrive better than that Pontius Pilate should crucify Jesus? For centuries they made no picture of the cross; their enemies did, but they did not. But they preached "Christ, and him *crucified*". Their minds were set on the salvation of men from sin, on the heralding of the love of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Yet whoever would think of society or government must recall, at some time, the most significant thing human government ever did—it "crucified the Lord of Glory", "who loved me and gave himself for me". Yes, the cross of Christ guarantees human freedom, because—because it cannot conceivably be the last word in human story. The victory cannot remain with Pilate; there is an alternative.

III

THOUGHT

Few periods can be of such import in human history as the Hellenistic age, which reaches, we might say, from the death of Alexander the Great to the death of Marcus Aurelius—five hundred years that saw new kingdoms in the Eastern Mediterranean, and new cities as significant, the rise and acme of Rome and the beginning of her decline, and then the decisive advance of the new religion. Yet apart from the great literary achievement of two generations of Romans, men generally count the period dull. The wars of Alexander's Successors mean nothing but the waste of human life for the glory of third-rate kings. The amazing and sudden ascendancy of Rome impressed Polybius, as we saw, but the general reader is more usually directed away from Polybius to writers less intelligent if more picturesque. In literature Athens overpowers every region of the Greek world and every period. What is Theocritus against the constellation that Pericles knew? With Cleanthes, according to Norden, the last Greek note in literature for two centuries is sounded and the rest is silence. The period is indeed significant, but, once you deduct Cicero and Horace and their contemporaries, it is not interesting except to those who have the patience to do without genius and to study the slow development of the average mind.

"The note of the whole Alexandrian period is the emergence of the middle classes", says Mr J. W. Mackail. There is a change in ideals with the decline of Greek democracy. After the riot of imagination and political experiment that mark the *floruit* of the "democratic man", with its amazing range from Aeschylus to Cleophon, Macedonian kings curbed Greek freedom, and Greek cities perforce had to think and act more reasonably, with more regard for the world outside, for commerce, and for sense. The conquests of Alexander broke open the hoards of the Persian kings, and Greece had more gold than in any period of her history. It may be true enough that in the long run it did her little good, but it changed the balance of life. People counted who had not counted before, and they had new ideas of what society asked of them. Demos being curbed by the kings, in Athens for instance a new system of education arises, the blend of two systems. Isocrates is the real inventor of that scheme of intellectual discipline which deliberately aims at culture, which works through reading, essays and the orderly stimulation of the mind. Others invented a sort of national training for the Athenian youth—drill, march, and corps. It is the first dawn of what in England is called the public school system, with the ideal that Juvenal summed up—*mens sana in corpore sano.* It produces citizens and even gentlemen, but it is criticized as fatal to genius. It was perhaps never intended for genius.

In the old days when genius was prevalent or even normal at Athens, there was no system of education. Then every man brought up his own son, with the

active co-operation of the son and of the common life of the city—πόλις ἄνδρι διδάσκει. The result was freshness and individuality. But these are not the qualities that appeal to a rising middle class, sick of the flightiness of democracy, or to people who make and man Boards of Education or the governing bodies of universities. They want something more reliable, something proved by the test of time, something (in plain words) safe and conventional, a sense of good form rather than stimulus. Wherever you have state-regulated education, that is what you will get rather than any real development of the mind for fresh adventure. Hence a change of note—care instead of freedom, "never glad confident morning again".

Mr Mackail is right. Wealth, as he says, and commerce were diffused; art was popularized; science, physical, historical, and mental, was widely cultivated. His verbs seem chosen to exclude the suggestion of depth and intensity. Demos had never liked the philosophers. A little philosophy, as Callicles put it to Socrates, is not a bad thing for a young man, but you can easily have too much of it. Philosophy was becoming detached from more things than democracy. Professor Burnet says that Aristotle's rejection of Platonist mathematics made a breach between philosophy and science. Philosophy suffered from both these cleavages; and it suffered from middle-class ideals. Here indeed the middle classes might quote Socrates, who avowed himself not much interested in astronomy; he was immensely interested in human conduct, and so are middle-class people. So philosophy turned away from politics, and no doubt the

dynasts were as content it should as the demagogues would have been; and it turned on the whole from physical speculation. Epicurus borrowed his physics; and Stoic and Epicurean alike devoted themselves to the conduct of life—to the quest of what will make middle-class people contented and happy, and good —with just enough reference to things universal to keep their system together but in no case too much for ordinary people.

The English eighteenth century had no Shakespeare, but it had a number of notable editors of Shakespeare —Pope, Theobald, Johnson. Its main interests lay elsewhere and so it was with the period we are studying. *Magna illa ingenia cessere*, in the phrase of Tacitus; there were no more the men of genius, but there was plenty of talent and it was developed. As Johnson complained of Scotland, everybody got a little learning and nobody a bellyful. A little learning, as we know, is a dangerous thing—dangerous because it does not show a man his ignorance, because it does not give him sevenfold the range he needs, because it means that everything he does is at best only half done and nothing done quite, and because, finally, he never learns nor suspects the difference between knowing and not knowing. We noted the "integrity", the "unity" of the age of Pericles. The Hellenistic age, like our own, produced decimals and acclaimed them as men, and as great men. And so they were in their way, like Touchstone's ill-roasted egg, all on one side; and Touchstone is right in calling that a synonym for "damned".

The system means the tradition. Probably nobody

gave Aeschylus lectures on style; in fact we know that style was a colonial invention, and came to Greece from the outsiders' world of Sicily after Aeschylus was dead, and Sophocles and Euripides were grown up. But Isocrates made it the tradition that every cultured person should be taught style, and for the world at large it was a good thing, but not for genius. Style meant the adaptation of another man's words to your ideas, and it was the ideas that suffered. Tight boots may be bad for the feet; they are far worse for the mind. For one thing, they keep you from thinking of anything else, and no poet ever became great by thinking of the alternation of his vowels; he must do it instinctively or leave it alone. Philosophy then was one thing and science another, and style something else, and the school was all.

W. D. Howells once commended Mark Twain because he was not conscious of his grandfather; but there Mark Twain and Howells were wrong. All art is co-operation if it is independence too—the outcome of a tradition *plus* the sense for the moment and the means to transcend the tradition. Sainte-Beuve says of one of the Hellenistic writers that he was *bon élève*, and the phrase describes most of them—the opposite vice to Mark Twain's.

Philosophy then lets the state as a rule alone; it is practical and individualistic, and it directs the attention to actual life. But

> The daily round, the common task,
> Ne'er furnish all we need to ask.

The Stoics were the most logical of men, but luckily they were more than logical. They made great con-

tributions to the humanizing of life everywhere; they humanized Roman law too through their influence on Roman lawyers and Roman character. But their system in practice threw the individual back upon himself—τὰ ἐπί σοι, "the things in thine own power", became a catchword with them, a fatal phrase that turned away recruits and paralysed their disciples. The loneliest book in Greek literature is the journal of Marcus Aurelius. Horace and others made genial fun of Stoic paradox and Stoic quirk, and Stoics gave themselves away. Might a man with propriety cross his legs as he sat at lecture? was one of their minor problems. It is good to study manners, to be reminded of duty to other men in the little things that jar or that help; so we must not perhaps laugh at the Stoic's question. It at least reminded the lecture room that "the things in their own power" have a reference to others; and that was good. Clement of Alexandria similarly told middle-class Christians not to spit, or fidget, or giggle, or do other unmannerly little things; and perhaps he did well; but with him the motive was a great one. The Stoic, however, left his class with the conception of duty to men, but also with the warning to be on their guard against them—with the conception of duty to the universe, but with no promise of help from the universe of the most real kind. When the late Hebrew moralist wrote that the universe is a champion for the righteous,[1] he was re-casting Hebrew thought in Stoic phrase—a splendid phrase; but his spiritual ancestor (or was it his contemporary?) who wrote "Behold, God is my helper" struck a far

[1] *Wisdom of Solomon*, xvi, 17.

more helpful note. Marcus Aurelius is a lonely soul. The Stoic is an item, *divinae particula aurae* no doubt, a "fragment of God"; but he is a branch broken off, a personal fragment of a great and practically soulless neuter, alone in a cosmos of abstract nouns, on his guard against the laughter of the child, the caress of the woman, the passion of the man of science.

The Epicurean had much the same outlook on the world; he too was a decimal, but his attitude was different. Neither he nor the Stoic steered the ship—that was evident; both were mere passengers, but the Stoic was fussing for ever about his possible duty on the bridge and in the engine room, while the Epicurean made himself comfortable in his cabin.

> Where the bearing power doth bear thee,
> Bear and be borne!
> If thou fret, it still doth bear thee
> Sore and forlorn.

But neither school would quite do, and men took two lines of escape from them. Men told of the great Greek painter who tried to paint the foam on a horse's mouth, and could not do it after many attempts. He lost his temper and threw his sponge at the wretched picture. It caught the horse on the mouth, and fell; and there was the foam! So, said the philosopher, you struggle this way and wrestle that way, and all is of no use; then you throw up the sponge, and lo and behold! you are at rest, you have by cessation of effort reached the peace you struggled for in vain; scepticism, the abandonment of inquiry, is the path to peace. You cannot solve the riddle of the universe;

then don't ask it; what is the use of "practising archery at a mark in the dark"?[1]

A nobler attempt to do the same thing was that of Posidonius. Mr Edwyn Bevan at least suggests that the formula "to make men at home in the universe" would give the key to the whole activity of Posidonius, his work in geography and physics and history as well as in philosophy. Posidonius was the arch-reconciler, the arch-eclectic, and it is of interest to note at once how wide was his influence, and how short-lived, and how utterly his books have perished. Two comments I may quote. One is Mr Bevan's own: "The eclecticism of later antiquity was the inevitable consequence of philosophy becoming popular"—or, in other words, of philosophy ceasing to be philosophy, whether it be kinder to call it instead talk of the school or death-bed consolation. The other is the more searching sentence of Novalis: "All eclectics are essentially and at bottom sceptics; the more comprehensive, the more sceptical".[2]

To scepticism it comes, to despair of the human mind, tempered by maxims of duty, perhaps, or of comfort, palliatives, *Interimsethik* as the Germans have said less relevantly in another connexion. If a metaphor serves to elucidate the thing, the ancient philosophers have reached a Modder river, a Hindenburg line, and there they are, all progress forbidden. They

[1] Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* viii, 325.

[2] Carlyle, Essay on Novalis, *Essays*, vol. ii, p. 38. Mr Bevan's phrase too was perhaps anticipated by Novalis: "Philosophy is properly Home-sickness; the wish to be everywhere at home".

may guard their trenches, or hang wallpaper in their dug-outs; they will go no further. Great as Plotinus was, and great his influence, I have a suspicion that his system also has too much of the eclectic in it, that he combines too much of old material; and in philosophy old material answers to what Socrates called the "unexamined life" and pronounced "unlivable for a human being".

In scientific inquiry, at any rate for a while, there was more life. Curiosity (let me quote Dean Inge again) "as the Greeks knew, and the Middle Ages knew not, is a virtue, not a vice".[1] That perhaps explains why we have to become as little children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven—and an interesting suggestion it is—no heaven for the incurious and the middle-aged. Very few Classical scholars are really competent to discuss Greek science or mathematics; I for one am not. Hence one hails with satisfaction such essays as one reads in *The Legacy of Greece* by Professor D'Arcy Thompson and Sir T. L. Heath. Sir Thomas quotes a brilliant writer, whom he does not name, to the effect that "in no spirit of paradox one may say that Euclid is the most typical Greek: he would know to the bottom, and know as a rational system, the laws of the measurement of the earth". Such a sentence is worthy of study by a generation which, after centuries of use, has allowed Euclid to go out of the schools in favour of what a great living physicist calls "drawing pictures". My own opinion is of slight value; to say I always felt Euclid to be the most gentlemanly form of Mathematics might stamp

[1] *The Legacy of Greece*, p. 56.

me at once as of the Hellenistic age which I am trying to interpret. Euclid certainly gave mental stimulus and trained us in exact thinking; but if *the* most typical Greek is to be named, I still think Herodotus may be considered. But an age that produces so typical a Greek as Euclid, and so great a teacher of so many generations, is not effete. Indeed it was far from effete. Alexander the Great in person explored the Indus, and he sent specimens back to Greece for Aristotle,[1] whose solid achievements in biology Professor D'Arcy Thompson so brilliantly vindicates.

But what strikes me as most interesting is the work of Aristarchus of Samos (about 281 B.C.) and Pytheas of Marseilles. Aristarchus "supposes that the fixed stars and the sun are immovable, but that the earth is carried round the sun in a circle". So says Archimedes, himself a famous name and a younger contemporary (287–212 B.C.), whose inventions are not yet all superseded. Cleanthes the Stoic confirms this, and illustrates the limitations of his school and the traditionalism of the age; for he held "that Aristarchus of Samos ought to be accused of impiety for moving the hearth of the universe (cosmos); for the man, in order to save the phaenomena, supposed that the heavens stand still and the earth moves in an oblique circle at the same time as it turns round on its axis".[2] Perhaps Cleanthes had more humour than Plutarch who quotes him; but the sentence suggests the Inquisition and Galileo. So Aristarchus was rejected, and Ptolemy ruled till Copernicus. Yet, if

[1] W. S. Ferguson, *Greek Imperialism*, p. 120.
[2] Dreyer, *Planetary Systems*, pp. 136, 138.

the Greek stanza attributed to Ptolemy be genuine, or even if it is merely a fair idealization of him, it is worth quoting:

> I know I am a mortal born, a creature of a day,
> But when I view the wheeling stars each on its cyclic way,
> No more I trudge the earth afoot, but, swept above the sky,
> I taste the gods' immortal fare with Zeus himself on high.[1]

Pytheas (about 330 B.C.) had the same fate as Aristarchus; he went too far for an age that loved safety and tradition. He explored the ocean, circumnavigated Britain, studied the tide in Pentland Firth, discussed the "sleeping place of the sun" and the arctic circle, and tried to calculate latitudes. He was dismissed as an impostor by the great Polybius; and Strabo used his name as a byword—sad as it is to write this of authors to whom one owes so much every way. Our own day has seen the credit of Pytheas revive, and there is a delightful chapter upon him in H. F. Tozer's fascinating book, *The History of Ancient Geography*.

To what ancient Science declined, the English reader may most conveniently see in John Clarke's *Physical Science in the Time of Nero*, a translation of Seneca's *Natural Questions*. Seneca discusses a great many curious phaenomena.[2] He reviews with scrupulous fairness all available considerations of them. On the negative side he is generally convincing; on the constructive side he is often ingeniously perverse, and misses weaknesses in his own theory that he would quickly see in an opponent's. Sometimes he adopts an error as old as Aristotle or even older; sometimes

[1] *Anth. Palat.* ix, 577.

[2] Clarke, *op. cit.* pp. xxxix–xlii.

he devises a new one. Very constantly he turns off in pursuit of a moral reflection. His weakness is that he discusses his phaenomena as items, rather than as detail in a connected whole; and he is weak in research. But he believes that posterity will yet explain such things as comets—"we imagine we are initiated in Nature's mysteries; we are as yet but hanging around her outer courts,[1]...we are permitted only to conjecture and to grope in the dark with no assurance of discovery, and yet not without hope".[2] Plutarch also compiled such a volume of Questions, as he did also on Greek and on Roman history; but Plutarch's mind is less masculine than Seneca's; there was little scientific apparatus at Chaeroneia, and less inclination to use it. Plutarch likes to know other men's guesses, here as in history, and to guess which is likeliest; and he frankly endorses his father's view that inquiry may unsettle faith.

Broadly speaking, in the scientific field, it was an age, as Mr de Burgh says,[3] of clever second-rate men. Eratosthenes, in several ways outstanding among them, was nicknamed *Beta* and *Pentathlos*. *Beta* needs little explanation in an age ruled by examiners; the other word hints at the master of five forms of athletics, supreme in no one of them. Eratosthenes at least wrote no poetry; but the age could boast other laborious persons who knew science and did write poetry, and, less well advised than he, combined them, Truth and Beauty, in stillborn epics. One must remember that Cicero and Virgil managed to read

[1] Seneca, *Nat. Qu.* vii, 31, 2. [2] Seneca, *Nat. Qu.* vii, 29, 3.
[3] W. G. de Burgh, *Legacy of the Ancient World*, p. 165.

these epics, as Milton did du Bartas. Every literature perhaps knows the sort. Juvencus on the Christian side in the fourth century tried to add "the sweetness of Mincian Maro" to the "vital deeds of Christ", unafraid that the flames that consume the world will destroy his work—Christian, Virgilian, and Stoic at once; but I never finished the second of his four books, despite a personal loyalty to the Stoics, to Virgil, and to Christ. But before we go further with Juvencus, let us return for a little to our Hellenists.

Beta—it was a cruel nickname, and more men than Eratosthenes deserved it; perhaps it belongs to all Alexandrian, all Hellenistic, literature. Pindar at least would say so—did say so, in fact, of the men of his time who tried to make learning serve instead of genius. "The true poet is he who knoweth much by gift of nature; but they who have only learnt the love of song, and are turbulent and intemperate of tongue, like a pair of crows, chatter in vain against the godlike bird of Zeus."[1] Few human hearts can ever have been made to beat by the songs of Callimachus, fewer by Lycophron's; admiration indeed they won by their ingenuity and learning, and somehow they contributed to Latin poetry. Theocritus is the outstanding name. In a world "immense, well-policed, monotonous; penetrated through and through by commercialism; pleasant for the well-to-do and not unbearable for the poor; full of distinguished men of science, fuller still of clever and facile artists; in the shadeless atmosphere and swarming life" of Alex-

[1] Pindar, *Olympian* 2, 86. Cf. *Ol.* 9, 100, "that which cometh by nature is ever best".

andria he felt keenly "home-sickness for the woods and streams and meadows of a more northern mountain land".[1] He at least suggested a new art in poetry in his vision of a new field of beauty. The heart was in it, and it was alive, and is still alive. There is sweetness in it—ἁδύ τι—and truth.

But for the rest, the conscious pursuit of style, the taint of rhetoric, the twin curses of erudition and imitation, the divorce from a people's real life, which we noticed before—all these things told against literature. Creation was beyond the men of Alexandria. "If Homer sometimes nods, and Apollonius never flags", asked Longinus, "would you choose to be Apollonius?" If they never knew a living Homer, they annotated the old one, purged his text, and served him well. Perhaps if one would not choose to be Apollonius, *fiet Aristarchus*; many men do in colleges.

In History it is much the same. Middle-class education craves facts, and it was given information in ill-assorted heaps by compilers of universal histories. The one great historian of the age ranks among the greatest of Greeks, if you could read him; in any language but his own Polybius is great, at times brilliant and even inspiring; in Greek he is a swan ashore. They failed to teach him style, and Clio did not give it to him.

But endless other literature, if you may use the word, saw light in this age beside learned poems, and historical compilations, scientific treatises, and universal handbooks. The Jew Ezekiel wrote a Greek

[1] J. W. Mackail, *Lectures on Greek Poetry*, pp. 217, 233.

tragedy about the Exodus from Egypt, of which fragments are saved by Eusebius. Ancient authors were re-discovered in very dubious manuscripts for the royal libraries. Enoch and Ezra, Moses and the patriarchs, were stirred to new life, and wrote posthumous works; the Sibyl too gave new oracles, of a strange sort, with her eyes on Hebrew history and monotheism. It was a sign of lost confidence, of a want of faith somewhere, when so much had to be ascribed to the dead—a confession that no one could expect anything worth while of a contemporary, and a true confession. This mass of books with their false titles are but poor reading.

Rome on the other hand had her golden age, with Cicero, Virgil, and Horace, and then the Republic ended; and if, as the Empire began, Virgil prophesied that it was but the beginning of greater things, the greatness lay in law and government, not in works of the spirit or the imagination. After their day, there is only Tacitus of the first rank, a great writer, but not an historian of the greatness of the older Greeks or even Polybius. Alexandrinism made itself felt in Rome. There too men realized that the great things in literature were done already; they imitated them aptly and caught everything but the greatness.

Plutarch is in many ways the most typical figure among men of letters in the Empire, good and gracious and learned, always readable beyond his fellows, full of good thoughts and good stories, a lover of heroes and an enthusiast for the past of his country. But he is never original; he never really grasps how or why a statesman of Greece or Rome was great. Never

malignant, he must praise wherever he can, he must keep all he can. He wrote endlessly on philosophy and religion, refuting Stoics and Epicureans, holding fast by every shred of religious tradition that he can in any way persuade himself to be valuable; and he could persuade himself very easily that the ancients were right, that newer doctrines from Egypt were as true, that image or ritual, no matter what it obviously was, could be construed into something else. Intellectually timid, he had a genial gift with talk and pen; and, as Montaigne put it, we "cannot do without Plutarch"; but, as happens perhaps with many authors, we value him most where he perhaps valued himself less.

Now if it seem ungracious to speak so of writers with whom I have spent years of my life, not without happiness, let me tell for one moment of an experience. For years I worked at the fourth century A.D., and then I came back, after long intermission, to the great poets and historians of Greece, and I understood in a new way what the Renaissance was. There are differences in literature, and in national temper, between one age and another, and history depends on our feeling them.

No one who has read long and industriously among the Apostolic Fathers and their successors, the Greek and Latin writers of the Church, will venture any such paradox as to say that in them literature is re-born like Pallas from the head of Zeus or Dionysus from his thigh. Heaps of what they wrote is no better than what their contemporaries produced. I find it difficult to think of a second-century pagan writer

whom one would not read more gladly than plough one's way again through the *Shepherd* of Hermas. It is a long slow story before art and literature become Christian, or before there is a Christian literature, any considerable part of which could be called first-class; and that is what you might reasonably expect. To this day there are good Christians who write abominably. There is not a Christian committee in England that can be trusted to write three pages of sound English which anyone would wish to read twice. Christians think terribly slowly at times, they miss the issue, they fight at the wrong angle, emphasize what does not matter and only half realize what counts. All this is true, and it was true in the ancient world. Then, as now, Christians had to share contemporary culture or have none; they deferred then, as now, to contemporary opinion, and were far too trustful of traditional beliefs and accepted results. Like the rest of the world, they would have condemned Aristarchus of Samos if they had heard of him; the earth was obviously flat and the sun went round it; and perhaps the Bible said so. To this day the Christian Church in many quarters, Catholic and Protestant, accepts with little reflection as integral elements of Christian belief masses of stuff derived, not from Christ, or from Paul, but from the third-century Greek (and late Greek) methods of interpretation, Neo-Platonist theology, Stoic and other Greek categories, Roman law (in far larger quantity than the orthodox dream) and even folklore and superstition of less exalted origin.

Yet when that unnamed writer to Diognetus, whose

"clean antiseptic quality" of mind we saw Gilbert Murray praise, says outright "to put it shortly, what the soul is in the body, that the Christians are in the world", what he says is true in more than the sense he gave it. The soul is in the body, not of it, invisible, hated by the flesh but loving it, and so forth, yes, and "immortal in a mortal tabernacle". The Christians had among them and in them the promise of life. The Fourth Gospel records Jesus as saying "I am come that they might have vitality and overflow with it"; and they did. They really believed what they said; they really had made new experiments in living and had had experience of new facts and new factors; and they were happy. They made little pretence at first to culture; Paul avowed to the Corinthians that he had none in their sense of it. Plato had once spoken of dealers in ideas, retailing them with the shopkeeper's praise of his wares;[1] and Paul, no doubt by accident, uses the same word—he will use no tradesman's arts in puffing or booming the Gospel, but talk facts, set down the thing as it was, conscious that he is in the sight of God. Christian preaching and teaching are to be as sincere as the sunlight. Experience, happiness and sincerity go a long way to create literature.

Look at a few judgments upon Paul's style.[2] "Paul", says Erasmus, "thunders and lightens and speaks sheer flame", and the same phrase, in the same words, is used by Luther of Paul. Luther again

[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, 313 D.

[2] Here I borrow from *Paul of Tarsus*, p. 194; and Norden, *Kunstprosa*, vol. ii, pp. 459, 599.

(in the old sixteenth-century translation of him) speaks of Paul using "a very strange and monstrous way of speaking, which phrase is sweet and comfortable". Norden, whose concern is with Greek style and not with theology, says honestly that he finds Paul hard to understand, which any man who reads him for himself will admit; he detects a Hebrew element in his Greek, which is likely enough; but in Paul "the language of the heart is born again. Since the hymn of Cleanthes nothing so intimate, nothing so splendid, had been written as Paul's hymn to love"; "those two hymns of love to God and love to men (Romans viii, 31; 1 Cor. xiii) have given again to the Greek language what had been lost for centuries, the intimacy and enthusiasm of the mystic, inspired by his union with God....How this language of the heart must have rung into the souls of men accustomed to the silly volubility of the sophists. In these passages the diction of the Apostle rises to the height of Plato's in the *Phaedrus*".

Will anyone maintain that, if Paul had remained a Pharisee, and refused the new experience, he would have written, or could have written, as he did? Style—Paul never thought of it; he knew enough to know that he could not vie with the pupils of the rhetoricians; but he did not want to vie with them, he had something better to do. He was conscious always of a new freedom every way, with which Christ had made him free, of a new happiness: and in these he rose. He can write almost as badly as the rest of us at times, just as Wordsworth could write as poor verse as most Englishmen, but it is in the heights that men

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are judged, and Paul, re-born in Christ, "is certainly", as Gilbert Murray says, "one of the great figures in Greek literature". What made him that?

Luke again wrote a book, with great care comparing authorities. One of the books that lay on his table we still have, and of late Mr Henry J. Cadbury, of Andover Seminary, has analysed with minute care Luke's literary re-handling of Mark. No one, who reads that study of Mr Cadbury's with attention, can suggest that Luke wrote anyhow in the conversational style of the day. He weighs Mark's words and phrases one by one, and uniformly (though with omissions which make us glad to have Mark as well) he tells Mark's story better than Mark told it. What he did with his other sources, we can only guess. But he wrote his own Gospel; and, if Renan called it "the most beautiful book in the world", I should not wonder if Renan were right.

It is not our task here and now to survey Christian literature, but I may be allowed a word for writers I have learned to love. Few beside myself have I met who love Tertullian; few perhaps ever read him; but what an amazing genius that great Latin had! What power of phrase! And how much of his power does he owe to the fact that he had something extremely real to say that called out all his gifts. Clement of Alexandria can be long and tiresome, heaping erudition and chronology together with perverse enthusiasm; but then he can also be exquisite, and there is music in his page that makes you love him. He claimed Greek culture and literature for Christ, and he made good the claim—not by the mechanical

contrivance of poor honest Juvencus, but by showing how Christ and Truth always go together, and proving in his own experience and his own style how happy is their union. Of Prudentius too what reader can think without some happiness, first of Christian poets, living still and a true forerunner of Bunyan?

In short, the Christian was brought in Christ into a new region of experience. Once that befalls a man of any insight, he stands for ever for exploration of the great things of God; he sets truth before tradition; he has a new feeling for the real and a new happiness in it. He may, by old loyalties, be misguided as to the form in which he expresses his new life; he will have of course all sorts of human limitations; but life is real and serious, and art is real and serious, and they meet whenever they can. It took centuries to reveal what Christ meant in thought and art and literature, giving new value to man, new wonder to God, and a new zest for life in the new intimacy with both; and the call of the Gospel is still to "read what is yet unread in the manuscripts of God".

IV

CHARACTER

"It is most significant", writes Dean Inge, "that the Gospel at once introduced a new ethical terminology. The Greek words which we translate love (or charity), joy, peace, hope, humility are no part of the stock-in-trade of Greek moralists before Christ. Men do not coin new words for old ideas." This is profoundly true; and yet the attention of the Christian world has been so often directed to what we call the Christian virtues, that we are apt to forget that the work of Christ was not to substitute one series or group of virtues for another, but rather to complete and to develop, with a new centre and a new passion, the whole round of virtues. "I am not come", he said, "to destroy but to develop"—to set men free, and for the obsession of failure to give the sense of power.

We have to realize how far Greeks and Jews had gone in the exploration of ethics, and then to see how the "loss of nerve", which marks the decline of the Hellenistic age, affected character and men's ideals and their sense of the possible.

Of late years archaeology has laid bare the remains of many peoples of whom a generation ago we knew nothing: and from the ruins of great architecture which speak of a skill we never suspected, from the remnants of altar and sculpture with affinities written large upon them that interpret them, from broken

hints of a luxurious and rich conception of life, we are challenged to reconstruct ages of history antecedent to the world we know in literature. It is not so easily done; men are more articulate in word than in stone. There lived heroes before Agamemnon, but they are still wrapped in night, if their palace foundations lie open to the day. For the mind of man is still dependent on the sacred bard—or, in modern English, if Horace is too poetic for us, it still needs genius to interpret it. In our particular study, we must let Minos rest, and start with Homer.

Whoever Homer's Achaeans may have been by race and origin, every Greek counted them as Greek as himself, and this belief gave Homer an influence which it is hard to over-estimate. Many Greeks, like Aristophanes, advanced the thesis that the function, the deliberate function and purpose of the great poets was to teach; and certainly the great poets, and Homer most of all, did teach Greece. But it is hard to think that this was the poet's prime purpose. Homer, the Greeks said, made their theology; the archaeologists hesitate over this, but it is in a very real sense true. Out of a mass of religious and semi-religious ideas he selected such as seemed to him to bear on his subject, and one faculty of genius is to turn all it touches to gold; and Olympian religion is one illustration of it. Whatever is said against it, in their different accents, by Miss Jane Harrison and Plato, it is a marked advance on all other Greek religion that survived alongside of it.

Homer did the same for character. He told his stories, obviously, for the little courts of clan chieftains

—kings they may be called, if the word is divested of modern uses; and no doubt, as we shall be assured, like Shakespeare, he had a shrewd idea of the preferences of his listeners. But, if the student of Elizabethan England begins with the idea that Shakespeare was the average Englishman of that day, he may be disappointed as he pursues his studies. Homer knew his men, the chieftains to whom he sang, the heroes of whom he told; and the one group are no doubt like the other—"like, but oh! how different!" The touch of genius secured that Achilles was a hero to the mind of the audience, and yet above them. In Achilles Homer drew man as he is, and man as we should all wish him to be—brave, loyal, passionate and truthful. He has the great universal virtues of courage and tenderness, and his faults are related to them, as men's faults are to their virtues; he is fierce and he is passionate. But he has the specially Greek virtues of the mind, clearness and intellectual honesty. So has Odysseus, whose clever lies make Athene smile; Odysseus can tell lies with any man, but Greek-like, if he does not abandon the lie on the lip, he will have no lie in the soul; and that we must remember and later on recall. Achilles goes further and will not have the spoken lie—"hateful to me as the gates of death is he that hideth one thought in his breast and speaketh another".[1] Here Achilles is perhaps less than Odysseus typical of later Greeks.

It is to be remarked at once that in Homer the heroes are normally on a higher moral plane than the gods—a fact which deserves study. For one thing,

[1] *Iliad*, ix, 312.

genius was freer to model them after its own heart's desire; the characters of the gods were traditional and not so easy to mould; and moreover one of the lasting Greek heresies (perhaps it is a universal heresy) was the feeling that power absolves its possessor from moral bonds. We have also to note that, while Homer drew the ideal hero to which the youth and imagination of Greece would for ever respond—did we not see that Homer was the book Alexander read from the Dardanelles to the Panjâb?—Homer stereotyped the gods for ever. The first duke of Marlborough avowed that he had learnt his English history from Shakespeare's plays. Research may demonstrate that Richard Crookback was morally and physically straight, but England will never believe it. Greece in the same way believed Homer; and it is impossible to explain Plato, if it is not true, as he said, that Homer's stories of the gods told everywhere against the moral growth of the Greek people. If the heroes inspired youth to purity and truth, there was Zeus, the father of lust and lies, all-powerful and free from moral law—like the Greek tyrant "outside ordinary thoughts". The stories of Greek tyrants and the talk of the Greek comedy show what it meant—"may I, a lad, not do it, if Jupiter does it?"[1]

The great period of Greece emphasizes the intellectual virtues.

"Themistocles", says the historian,[2] "was a man whose natural force was unmistakeable.... From his own native acuteness, he was the ablest judge of the course to be pursued in a sudden emergency and could best divine what was most likely to happen

[1] Terence, *Eun.* iii, 5, 36 ff. quoted by St Augustine, *Confessions*, i, 16, 26.

[2] Thucydides i, 138.

in the remote future....Moreover he had the ability to expound to others....To sum up all in a word, by sheer force of nature he was the ablest of men."

It is remarked that to Herodotus this statesman, for all his powers of mind, was not sympathetic; and Plutarch, as was natural, would prefer some one second-rate. People who specialize in moral virtues mistrust those whose virtues are intellectual, perhaps with some excuse. But Socrates linked both sorts of virtue; moral failure was due to intellectual dimness; if a man really *knew* what is right, he would obviously do it. On the authority of that odd moralist Ovid, this is disputed by some, and others more aptly cite St Paul; but perhaps Socrates and his group would say that it depends on what is meant by knowledge —an acquaintance with proverbs, or a deep reading of universal Law and of Nature. Even so, the evidence of St Paul must also be carefully weighed; and we may note, for future reflection, that there is more than a little of Greek individualism in the pronouncement of Socrates, and that Paul's conceptions of right are shaped by his belief in a personal God.

How far sensitiveness to beauty is a virtue or not, may be a matter for discussion. The Greek very markedly had this gift, and our English poets would be apt to count it a virtue, as Plato did,[1] who held that beauty works in the soul reminiscence of the ideal beauty, the divine beauty, and is thus what Christians might call a means of grace. But I must not transcribe here either the great pages of the *Phaedrus* or the stanzas of Spenser's *Hymne to Beautie*.

[1] See the splendid passage in the *Phaedrus*, 247–251.

I may remark in passing that Spenser, like a good Platonist, believes with all his heart in the healing power of Truth, and stands bravely for the intellectual virtues. Plato makes God the norm of all things,[1] and likeness to God the end and object of creation and the ideal of man—which intellectualizes all the virtues at once, and makes the good peasant Hesiod with his material and bucolic rewards for prudential virtues, and all who believe with him in the cash value of goodness, look foolish and provincial. And it cuts at Greek religion too, as we shall see.

"Let a man be of good cheer about his soul", he says, "who has cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him, and rather hurtful in their effects, and has followed after the pleasures of knowledge in this life; who has adorned the soul in her own proper jewels, which are temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these arrayed she is ready to go on her journey to the world below, when her time comes."[2]

Brave and splendid words! But meantime what of the gods—or God—or "the divine"? And perhaps the reader, who knows English hymnology, will have noted in Jowett's rendering of Plato an assonance with Wesley's translation of Zinzendorf's hymn, and may wonder whether it was quite accidental. For between Zinzendorf's outlook and Plato's there is all the difference that the knowledge of Christ can make; but that is to come.

In the age after Alexander, when the scope for the political virtues was so abruptly constricted, "the simple human virtues of the individual man or woman —the servile virtues—came to the front", as Mr

[1] Plato, *Laws*, iv, 716 c. [2] Plato, *Phaedo*, 114.

Bernard Bosanquet put it; and as I cannot think the conclusion of his sentence at all consonant with history, let me patch it with one or two other phrases of his—"the delight in family life, the interest in man as man, all phases of sentimental love, sensitiveness to the beauty of external nature both in itself and as heightened by contrast with city life".[1] The later Greek comedy, as represented in Roman adaptations and in the lately recovered fragments of Menander, is poor enough; but it shows us a new character, the loyal and kindly slave, often the one sympathetic and human character in the foolish play. What the comic poet showed on the stage, the Stoic taught on the street—the slave is human, deserving of human kindliness and capable of the great human virtues. It might be urged that nothing could be so futile for moral issues as a Stoic's declamation unless it were a play of the New Comedy, but, comic or Stoic, the idea made its way into hearts and consciences of men, and even Roman law at last felt its influence. Nor was it the slave only who re-entered the human family; for those old friends of man, the birds and the flowers, won new interest and affection. But to avoid prolixity, let me briefly ask you to consider again the range of virtues, the ideal of character, that Virgil presents, and to reflect on the saying of Sainte-Beuve—"la venue même du Christ n'a rien qui étonne quand on a lu Virgile".[2]

The *Aeneid* represents the highwater mark of ancient morality, but Virgil and Plato were essentially poet

[1] B. Bosanquet, *Civilization of Christendom*, p. 43, and p. 35.
[2] Sainte-Beuve, *Étude sur Virgile*, p. 63.

souls, and the world, under the Successors of Alexander, under Rome's Emperors and civil servants, was growing more and more prosaic. The effects of that "failure of nerve", which Professor Bury has taught us to watch, can be seen in the field of character. The political virtues were largely out of action. The intellectual virtues were less and less emphasized in organized education or in the wider training of life in the world; and in the end they came to be mistrusted, partly because they were too apt to run into cleverness and to contempt of the other virtues, partly because they were too difficult for a cowed and timid age. The Stoics still preached the moral virtues, and it was well that they did. The *Letters* of Seneca and the *Discourses* of Epictetus show us the better side of that age, and introduce us to men of real moral earnestness, about whom gathered anxious disciple souls, troubled with the sense of failure, conscience-stricken, but still more or less in earnest. We read the story of Dio Chrysostom the rhetorician, "proud as the peacock of his tail and ever turning round to admire himself",[1] converted to a genuine preacher of righteousness, without losing his charm of style; and we read his stories of life in desert Euboea and in Southern Russia—pictures, idealized but winsome, of simple life and manly virtues. We read in Horace, and in less amusing authors, of the Stoic sage, and conceive how life may be conformed to a great exemplar—"what would Socrates have done in such a case, or Zeno?" "Though you are not yet a Socrates, you ought to live as one who wishes to be a Socrates." "Go away

[1] Roughly the description of him by Synesius, *Dio*, 3.

to Socrates and see him...think what a victory he won over himself."[1] This is a change of note. The contemplation, that Plato urged, of the divine procession, of Zeus, lord of heaven, in winged chariot, escorted by gods and demi-gods and human souls, glorious and blessed sights in heaven itself,[2] was too difficult by now, and not immediately practical even for "a fragment of God". Plato did not so hold up Socrates, for immediate imitation –not, we may be sure, from want of reverence. But Zeno was not even Greek—a Phoenician, un-Hellenic in appearance and mind, a dark-skinned and ungainly figure, blunt of speech, emphatic in gesture, dogmatic in temper.[3] Still he too was a conqueror in life, and a man, and so far intelligible.

But once again we have to picture the background of the age to ourselves—the failure of democracy and monarchy, the collapse and disappearance of ancient ideals and of the half-hopes that succeeded them, the haunting fear that the world itself is not rational, the misery of being ruled either by Chance or by Fate and of the very uncertainty as to which indeed was king. Add to that the essential anxiety of polytheism —so many gods, and of none can you be sure, nor of their character, whether they are Greek gods or barbarian. Fear is the mark of this later polytheism. If the humourist was right who parodied Max Müller and other exponents of Hellenism, if the older polytheism was of "that joyous bright Hellenic type,

[1] Epictetus, *Manual*, 33, 50; and *Discourses*, ii, 18.
[2] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 253, 254.
[3] Cf. Edwyn Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics*, pp. 17, 19.

which saw no harm in anything in particular, and didn't stick at it, when it did"—not so unfair a parody of the world of Pindar perhaps or of Aristophanes—all that was changed. The Superstitious Man is one of the Characters of Theophrastus—with a laurel leaf in his mouth, always running off to the expounder of sacred law, the interpreter of dreams, or the Orphic priest, purifying his house, sprinkling himself, dodging innocent pollutions and spitting to avert omens. Cicero, Horace and Plutarch all describe him. What moral progress could there be for a man so preoccupied? Such fear plays havoc with morals as it does with the intellect, as every student of polytheism knows. No polytheistic religion is, or can be, primarily ethical; the main interest lies elsewhere, in safety; and all intellectual life is nullified by the lie in the soul. The traditional character of the gods rose over men in this period of decline. "Who can change any of their *dogmata*—their fundamental beliefs?" was the sad question of Marcus Aurelius; you can do nothing with men till you change their "master-thought". Paul sees the same thing; a Jew, he traces all the corruption in the world to false conceptions of God. He was more of a Platonist than he knew. In contemporary paganism there was no hope of reformation; so far from that, the tendency was the other way. Stoicism continually declined—Marcus Aurelius was the last great name of the sect. Everything testifies to the huge growth of superstition of every kind, not least the abject surrender to it of philosophy. Loss of nerve was followed by loss of brain and loss of self-respect.

When we turn to the Jewish world, modern study has put us in the happy position of being able to trace a great progress in the national thought, in religion and in ethics. What exactly was the faith of the famous patriarchs, few scholars would readily venture to pronounce. At the beginning of the national history later Hebrews set the abrupt injunction from God to kill off the Canaanites, man, woman and child. Even the attractive author or reviser of Deuteronomy, the contemporary or the follower of Jeremiah, makes a point of this wholesale extermination, though commentators ease the matter by urging that long before his day the Canaanites had disappeared, more probably by absorption, and that he was really throwing a theory of his own back into history. The legends of the national heroes were full of curious conduct, of treachery and cruelty, which the nation, taught by the prophets, was beginning to reprobate in contemporary life. Amos, as historical and modern a figure as John Wiclif, condemned the surrounding heathen and announced their coming punishment at the hands of God, for exactly the sort of thing that the Joshua and David of famous story had done. But Deuteronomy, despite its injunction of savagery upon ancestors removed by hundreds of years, is a book full of lessons of kindness and humanity for men of its own day, of thought for widow and orphan and newly married, even for birds and their nests.

Two strains are ever to be seen in Jewish history and character, the prophetic and the priestly; and they answer the one to the poet and the philosopher of the Greek world, and the other to the bureaucrat

and civil servant of the Roman Empire. The one stands for exploration of the mind of God, and the other for the maintenance of human tradition and discipline. The two schools part over sacrifice. The Jew of Jerusalem, in possession of the temple, stands for sacrifice, for the old ritual and the old ideas, till the very family name of the hereditary priests became the world's synonym for the unspiritual conception of life. The Jew of the Dispersion was automatically cut off from temple and altar, from priest and sacrifice, and came to see that the religion of Jehovah did not depend on them. Hence Judaism fluctuated between two types of character, two lines of thought upon ethics. Did righteousness lie in ceremony, in ritual, in technical purity—a view supported strenuously by contemporary paganism, by priests of Cybele and Isis, not interested in morality? Or was it an affair of the heart, of the nature and the will, as the prophets urged? The psalmists varied, some for the one, some for the other view; and sometimes the editors of the psalter seem to have tried to adjust them to one another, not without awkwardness.

The main points about Judaism and its progress are these. The Jew swung clear earlier than the Greek, and more decisively, of taboo. He kept certain taboos, of which Christian apologists made full use—"fuss" about butter and blood and an idle seventh day and forbidden meats. But in the main his conceptions of sin and righteousness, like those of other men in other races and ages, depended on his conception of God, and that was a high one. "Be ye holy as I am holy" is more than a precept of Jewish law, it is a

universal canon of religion. Modern people do not readily realize that "holy" is not a word of any definite moral content; it varies exactly with the religion to which it belongs, and with the character of the God or gods, in whom that religion finds a centre. Despite Jerusalem and the Sadducees, the Jewish people took the higher view of their God, and recast the idea of holiness, which it is only fair to say was rising in value even in the heathen world. Plato perhaps was the source of this change outside Judaism, but in any case the word was coming to be definitely associated with morality.

But Judaism had a law, and the law had "hedges", and the life of the strict Jew was full of such observances as some defenders of religion still justify as material safeguards of spiritual life. Psychologically, they are in the main wrong; it is well to "put habit on the side of religion", as Mr Gladstone suggested to his son; but spiritual life depends better on spiritual contacts than on mechanical rules of conduct. Two reactions from over-insistence on multiplicity of regulation are to be observed. Paul was miserable with the sense of failure to keep the law and its hedges. Other Jews took, as Mr Claude Montefiore points out, a more sensible sort of attitude; they had to keep the law as far as they could—a very big qualification, and we may pause there.

Scaevola, the great Roman lawyer, was asked what things might be done on the great festal days when all work was forbidden as sin. "Anything, the omission of which would be injurious", was his judicious answer. In regard to personal morals, Epictetus bade men "avoid sexual intercourse as far as you can before

marriage; but, if you indulge your passions, let it be where it is lawful".[1] And here is the Jew, committed to doing his best to keep God's law, as far as he can. Is it unjust to suggest that all these qualifications come to the same thing—to what Jesus put in the form of the Unjust Steward's advice, "take thy bill quickly and write eighty"? Is not the very qualification in essence a counsel of despair?

We have already considered the suggestion that the Graeco-Roman world had reached a halting place in its progress, a Hindenburg line which it could not break. Here we find further evidence in the same direction. The Jew and the Stoic, the sturdiest of the world's moralists, have reached the point where they have to compromise. The Stoic knows what Nature and the cosmos ask of the "fragment of God" called man, and the fragment cannot meet the claim—then, let him do his best. Stoicism saw a series of abatements and compromises; the term, οἱ προκόπτοντες, *proficientes*, cloaks one; there was after all a middle stage between the Perfect Sage and the man who was not the Sage. The Jew knew the Law of God, and gave up the hope of really keeping it; he made shift with doing his best (a phrase that a man never uses of himself except to surrender with); he trusted that God would almost certainly forgive him, else why the Day of Atonement? "C'est son métier", as Heine said. Thus the serious thinkers—we need count no others outside of Jew and Stoic—found in Nature and in God's Law a morality beyond man's

[1] Epictetus, *Manual*, 33. Horace says the same, with shocking callousness, in one of his Satires.

range or hope. To admit this was to deal a fatal blow at effort. Concede that you must end in compromise, and you end very soon, or you begin with compromise. The wonder is that Jew and Stoic, with this before them, fought as long and as well as they did.

For the rest we need not linger. The most fatal thing in the world is to deceive oneself. The morality of Plutarch, fortified by every precedent, every quibble, that he could amass, borrow, or invent, rested on foundations which he frankly dared not examine. His conception of holiness had no real centre. Solomon Schechter's epigram about Oxford where "they practise fastidiousness and call it holiness" might have been coined for Chaeroneia and its pretty pieties; for Plutarch had no real support in his gods native or borrowed—a charming personality, far less indebted than he supposed to his religion.

Into this scene struck the Christian Church, admittedly deficient in culture, as Celsus triumphantly pointed out, and as Paul had already conceded a century earlier—not many wise men among them. They began by refusing to compromise on morality, and they perplexed the world. "Those who summon men to the other initiations", wrote Celsus, "and offer purification from sins, proclaim: 'Whosoever has clean hands and is wise of speech', or 'Whosoever is pure from defilement, whose soul is conscious of no guilt, who has lived well and righteously'". "But let us hear what sort the Christians invite: 'Whosoever is a sinner, or unintelligent, or a fool—in a word, whosoever is god-forsaken, him will the Kingdom of God receive'. Now whom do you mean by the sinner,

but the wicked—thief, house-breaker, poisoner, temple-robber, grave-robber? Whom else would a brigand invite to join him?"[1] Celsus forgot that in the rites of Eleusis and in the mysteries of Isis and Cybele, the unclean had their part on the basis at most of a temporary and ceremonial purity. He obscured the fact that the Christian invited all these undesirable people to the Church with a promise of reformation of life; perhaps he was unaware that this change of life was welcomed by such people and became real, or perhaps he did not believe it possible. The Stoics doubted it.

There lay the great surprise. The Christians came with a message of the highest conceivable morality to men and women who had failed to satisfy even the abridged standards of a pagan city, to men and women of broken will, "hardened to stone" and "past feeling", as even the Stoics said. They expected a response; they preached repentance and reformation; and people did respond, they repented and they lived new lives. Paul told his friends at Corinth very bluntly what wastrels, what detritus of society, they had been, and he reminded them of the change, the total change, to real purity and manhood that had been wrought in them. He had the facts before him. The apologists repeat the argument from Christian morality—"they obey the appointed laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives".[2] So far from compromising in matters of sex, they are forbidden even a lustful look.[3] They point again and again to

[1] Celsus *ap.* Origen, *c. Celsum*, iii, 59.
[2] *To Diognetus*, 5, 10. [3] Tertullian, *Apology*, 45.

the firmness of the Christian martyrs, women, slaves and ordinary people as they were, tranquil as Socrates under worse tortures. Something had changed them.

As to what that was, the Christian made no secret. His Master asked of him, quite simply and directly, the utmost of morality, not to the standard of Socrates or any lesser figure of tradition, but to the standard of God Himself, measured by no Homeric scale, but the scale of Jesus. "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect"—what a call in a world of compromise and lost nerve! But, beside setting a standard, it gave to morality a centre and a motive—"according as He who called you is holy"—and the word "holy", susceptible of so many meanings, began to assume its last and greatest meaning of "Christlike". "What would Socrates do?" counselled the Stoic; and as one reads the story of the Church and the books of the apologists, it comes home to one that Socrates must often have been quoted against the Christian. "What would Socrates do?" Had Socrates the compass, the spirit, the life of him, of whom the Christian thought when he heard the Stoic question? Was the relation with Socrates as dear or as potent as with him "who loved me and gave himself for me"?

Epicurean and Stoic had laid stress on "undisturbedness" and "freedom from emotion"—in each case an essentially selfish canon of life, and in the Stoic's case modified at all times by the memory of the rest of the cosmos, of which he was a fragment. "Freedom from emotion"? The Greek word was, and is, letter for letter, *apathy*. "I do not hold", wrote

the gentle Plutarch, "with those who hymn the savage and hard Apathy."[1] There was a moment when a gracious and beautiful Christian tried to naturalize that Stoic term in the Christian vocabulary; but it could not be done. It was no ideal of Christ's; he was *pathetos*, "liable to feeling" (or suffering); a tremendous battle had been fought over that word—the very antithesis of *apathy*, and the Christian Church could not hold both. And had not Christ himself told his followers to deny, to negate, themselves? How is a Christian negating himself if he fortifies himself like a Stoic against all that his Master felt and chose to feel? If the Master so gave himself away in love to Judas Iscariot as to feel all that treachery could do, if he endured the cross, shame and anguish and all, for men, how dare a Christian cherish the thought of *apathy*? No, like the Master he must "expose himself to feel what wretches feel". There lay one of the secrets of Christian morality; its keynote was not self-protection, but the utmost of self-giving help for others, and the dynamic was the love of Christ "who loved me and gave himself for me". The Christian does here exactly the opposite to the Stoic; the Stoic emphasized the self—"the things in thine own power"—and strove to protect that self in tranquillity from the emotions that other selves would awake in it. The Christian emphasized the personalities of others—of Christ to begin with and then of everybody else, of whom it could be said "for whom Christ died"—and forgot the claims of his own self. The outcome was that he proved the paradox of

[1] Plutarch, *Consol. ad Apoll.* 3, 102 c.

Christ to be true; he gained by losing, saved his soul by letting it go.

The thing that above all ruined ancient society was the increasing withdrawal of responsibility from the individual. With the fall of democracy, citizenship with its duties and its training went. Of course there were trifling local things to do which could be entrusted to impotent little local town councils, to bailies and Bumbles; Plutarch held magistracies of this kind. But ancient history teaches us that men are made great by great responsibilities. Caesar and the great soldiers and administrators of the Republic were made by having to manage great provinces and great armies, by huge responsibilities. The decline of character in the Empire, conversely, was brought about inevitably by the government seeing to it that ordinary people had nothing to do outside the market. The Christian religion changed all that, till the Church borrowed the names and the plans of the civil administration, bishops and dioceses and so forth. Responsibility, a free initiative, the sense of the future, these are the things that make character; and they were of the very fabric of the Christian life. At every turn, the Christian met opportunity, and the cry of Paul is in a way a summary of two centuries of Church life—"Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!" His task was to bring the whole world effectively to Christ.

The task was enormous. No one, I think, can even begin to measure it who has not stood alone in the swarming population of some great city of a heathen land. There he will understand the incredulity and

contempt with which a Celsus can contemplate the Christian dream of bringing all the races with all their differing traditions, faiths, philosophies and cultures under the single law of Christ. It is very well to emphasize the great gain to the Christian of a moral ideal without compromise, of the standards of God, of identification with the world's sin and sorrow, of responsibility, initiative and so forth; but where was the dynamic? *Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* The dynamic lay in the sense of the presence of Christ with the believer. "The Lord stood at my side and put strength into me", wrote Paul quite simply about a dreadful moment in life. The New Testament is full of that thought; and, if it be urged that it is a mere delusion, the Christian Church was built on nothing else. Faith—a great deal is talked about faith; Paul lived on it, talked it, preached it; and so did the writer to the Hebrews; and some people tell us they are so far right, but it doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you believe something; anything will serve. That is poor psychology however, and the Christian was given plenty of opportunity to test whether his faith was in anything real or not.

Ancient morality gave out; based too much on tradition, it was beset by fear, it compromised and declined. The Christian pitched his ideals "according to Christ", would have no compromise with evil, fought and overcame sin—not in his own strength but by faith in Christ. A later age saw the Christian ascetic as the age of Paul might have seen monks of Serapis or further afield Hindu sannyāsis—battling with sin very much in their own strength, the re-

nunciation that springs from despair. But sin is not vanquished so. Evil has to be overcome with good, and the secret of Christian victory lay in this, that, constrained by the love of Christ, the Christian gave himself body and soul to Christ for Christ's purposes, put his hand to the work of Christ for sheer love of him, made the work (preaching, patience, martyrdom, whatever it was) a matter of steady communion with the Master, shared his thoughts, knew his help, fought with him at his side, lost his soul for him and found it in him.

Three hundred years separate the seventh and eighth chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans from the *Confessions* of Augustine. What won Augustine was the fact that the Church was repeating the experience of Paul. He was miserable; the Christian had peace; he lived in sin, the Christian was given forgiveness of sin and victory over it. Augustine was great enough and true enough to recognize and own the reason; he too accepted what God offered, he "put on the Lord Jesus", he found peace, and he became in the new life one of the great teachers of mankind.

V

LIFE OR DEATH?

It has been suggested that the centre of the Christian message in the Graeco-Roman world was not the death of Christ but His resurrection—that the emphasis was on life. It would be hard to pronounce one way as against the other. If Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I determined to know nothing among you save Christ and him crucified", he also wrote to them the great chapter on resurrection and immortality. At Athens, Luke tells us, Paul was not long before the Areopagus till proceedings abruptly ended on his alleging that Jesus was risen from the dead. It is well to linger over that Athenian episode, when some laughed outright at Paul's tale, the silliest stuff that had ever been brought to so cultured an audience, and others, with much the same opinion, more politely suggested postponement. A century later Celsus was burlesquing (not altogether without warrant) the Christian propaganda as based on the two words "Only believe". We hear a great deal about the decline of intellect and the resurgence of superstition in those centuries, and it is indeed a true account of them. But we have never to forget that, whatever influence Oriental ritual and superstition gradually gained, the culture of the world was Greek. A modern philosopher[1] has summed up Socrates by altering one

[1] Mr C. F. Angus of Cambridge.

letter in the English version of Paul's sentence—"though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have not *clarity*, I am nothing". This happy adaptation is a reminder we need.

The Gospel was not brought into a world of peasants trained in credulity, like the people to whom the Virgin will appear and for whom her statuettes will shed tears of rainwater. Such persons were of course in the world in plenty; and, as Lucian tells us, in his *Lover of Lies*, they would believe anything if it was only absurd enough, and they were not all peasants. But it was in truth a world trained by centuries of Greek thinkers to a sad lucidity of soul. Lucian and Celsus represent one end of the world with the masses of superstitious slaves and peasants at the other. Between them stood the great body of mankind, the middle classes, as we were told to note, with their practical ideals of a half-education and their resultant inability quite to accept or quite to reject any proposition that involved thought. Perhaps the words of another Christian writer of those days, a man as well-trained and as lucid in mind and style as any of them, apply to all three groups—that "through fear of death they were all their lives subject to bondage". The question was whether he was justified in saying there was one to deliver them from that bondage; and here, as in all matters of the intellect, assertion was of no use. No matter how many people maintained that they had seen the risen Christ, it was of no importance; it would convince no educated person; the only real evidence could be the

manifest achievement of release from that bondage of fear.

The debate as to the possibility of existence after physical death was an old one. If Odysseus finds his way in the *Odyssey* to an abode of the dead, there is little in the *Iliad* even to hint that the dead needed an abode. A dream suggests to Achilles that the dead have—something; I do not want to be more explicit, for I note that four outstanding authorities contradict one another in translation. Professor T. D. Seymour, of Yale, put it "second self, an image of the body, no intelligence, *nous*, or emotions", which may be right but does not in English sound very Homeric. Achilles in the *Odyssey* tells Odysseus he would sooner be a hired labourer alive on earth, working for a man of no substance, than king of all the dead. Zeus himself sheds tears for the death of one of his half-divine sons. But really the last word on it is that spoken by Glaucus to Sarpedon:

> Friend of my soul, were it that, once quit of this war, thou and I should live for ever free from old age and death, neither would I fight among the foremost, nor would I send thee into the battle that gives glory to men. But, since fates of death stand over us—aye! ten thousand of them, that mortal men may not flee nor escape, *let us go*, whether we give glory to another or another to us.

The so-called Homeric Hymn to Demeter swings the other way. There are holy rites at Eleusis, "goodly mysteries which none may violate, or search into, or noise abroad, for the great curse from the gods restrains the voice. Happy is he among mortal men who hath beheld these things! and he that is uninitiate and hath no lot in them, hath never equal lot in death beneath the murky gloom".

So there is the antithesis stated, the cleavage that runs through all ancient thought upon the matter. On the one hand the fact of death, faced and accepted as either absolutely final, or at least final so far as we can know, and on the other the half-belief that there are secret ways to get round the dire fact. On the one side stand the thinkers, the matter-of-fact, and the heroes; on the other the priests with the tender and timid spirits who always prefer to be somewhere near them. Not everybody could say with the Athenian poet

δεινὸν γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων βροτοῖς.

Whether he means "strange" or "terrible", death does remain strange to all and terrible to many. Not all could believe in the pictures of happy islands "where Ocean breezes blow and flowers of gold are blazing, and with chaplets thereof the heroes entwine their hands and with crowns".[1] Plato and the other philosophers did not agree. Plato rejected with contempt the Orphic teaching about a happy other world, where the duly initiated should have their fit reward in "eternal drunkenness";[2] and yet Plato, as we saw, believed that arrayed in justice, temperance and truth the soul may face the unseen with tranquillity. Pythagoras fancied there might be transmigration of souls—if the soul be eternal hereafter, he and his followers could associate no meaning with its eternity unless it were also eternal heretofore; and if that were true, what else could it be doing but becoming incarnate in one body after another? It is remarkable that the poet Euripides never touches

[1] Pindar, *Olympian* 2, 70 (Sandys). [2] Plato, *Rep.* ii, 364, 365.

this theory, probably because he felt there was no bottom to it, it wholly lacked evidence. Aristotle would appear to have been of the same mind as to any after-life at all; the "master of those who know" either disbelieved or was not interested in a hypothesis for which he could examine no evidence. Aristophanes put the scene of one of his comedies in the other world, and introduced a band of the initiate singing a hymn; which either shows how daring he could be, or how little Demos cared about another world. At all events in that other world, according to the comic poet, literary criticism still flourishes.

It was the same after Alexander and in the Roman epoch. The great poem of Lucretius has one aim. By mustering all that is known about Nature, and all that is understood or reasonably conjectured about her processes, he tries to demonstrate that there can be no other life. It is the system of Epicurus, that true "god" who set men well on a level with heaven and trod Acheron underfoot. That this emancipator borrowed his physics, and that it was questionable science at best, the poet does not add. But, when Lucretius resolves the soul into its various elements, he recognizes among them a certain "soul of the soul", *anima animae totius ipsa*, "secreted in its inmost depths, and nothing in our body is farther beneath all ken than it", and he honestly says he cannot explain it.[1] He admits that the sight of the broad expanses of heaven, the aether set on high above the glittering stars, and the thought of sun and moon and their goings, wake the old doubt that we may after all

[1] Lucretius iii, 273–275.

have to do with some vast divine power that wheels those bright stars, each on its course. The poet in him gives the philosopher's case away. The proof is not yet complete that Epicurus has abolished another life, and the gods who make the sting of it; nor is it proved that the soul is material and outside the range of hell or heaven. All that Lucretius has proved is how horribly afraid of death he is. Horace is on one side of him—a far more genuine Epicurean, most genial and friendly of the tribe, but at heart a man for whom one world suffices. For Virgil one world did not suffice; and he seems to have left in mature life the Epicureanism which in youth he expected to "set him free from all care". When Tacitus reaches the end of his Life of Agricola, it is significant that as to another life he must use an *if*—

> if there be any habitation for the spirits of just men, if, as the sages will have it, great souls perish not with the body, mayest thou rest in peace, and recall us and thy house from weak longing and womanish laments to the study of thy worth. . . . Whatever in Agricola we have loved, whatever we have admired, remains and will remain in the minds of men, in the endless course of time, by the glory of noble deeds. Many a hero of old has gone to oblivion with the common herd; the story of Agricola has been transmitted to those who come after, and he will live.

A strange mingling of friendship and love with doubt of man's lot and faith in one's own pen.

But great questions, as Lucretius saw, want a large treatment; they can never be isolated; they are answered, if at all, by a man's total view of the universe. The Stoic taught, as we saw, that every man is a "fragment of God", and with God at his death he is rejoined; a holy spirit dwells within him and

to God he goes again. The words have a very Christian sound, but they were not in the least Christian. The holy spirit may not have been more than breath given by Nature, or at most a mind which can respond to the cosmos. The return to God was in fact the loss of personality. The Stoic had far more personality than his God; and, since he was, body and soul, material as an Epicurean could desire, he looked forward to being resolved into his constituent elements—gases and carbon compounds would be the modern phrase —"dust, ashes, bones and stench", Marcus Aurelius said. His God, who was after all only the cosmos, would use the carbon and nitrogen again for something "of which the universe has need". If, as in tracts of consolation a Stoic might suggest, there should be a heaven, or haven of sorts, for the soul, it was but for a time: "Then, we also, happy souls who have been assigned to eternity, when God shall see fit to reconstruct the universe, when all things pass, we too, a little element in a great catastrophe, shall be resolved into our ancient elements". The Stoic believed that the universe moved on in great cycles; and, when the circuit is complete, all begins again and happens once more, exactly as it did the last time. What the use of this monotonous repetition could be, is, I think, not explained, nor where in it all is rest or comfort for unhappy and solitary souls. Origen, who took it over from the Stoics, as a well-trained man is apt to take over scientific dogma, held that in the series of world-orders there is constant upward progress; the conflagration, which for the Stoic does nothing but start the old course again, is really,

Origen taught, a purifying fire, though he hinted that it might not do to tell this to everybody, since the fear of endless perdition exercises a salutary restraint on many sinners.[1] This compound doctrine, however, was neither quite Christian nor quite Stoic.

Plato speaks with indignation of the quacks and prophets who come to rich men's doors, hawking their religious rites and initiations, and "persuade them that they have power from the gods, by means of sacrifices and chants, to cure any wrong deed of their own or their ancestors in a course of pleasure and feasts".[2] The procession never ceased, and it was more and more reinforced from the Orient.[3] "The barbarians", says Celsus in a curious passage,[4] "are equal to discovering religious truths (*dogmata*), while the Greeks are better at criticizing and establishing them when discovered." Mystery, symbol, taboo heightened with the suggestion of religious awe, the air of holiness, "pink pieties" as some one has called them—the appeal of these things is quite familiar to-day; and the appeal of a sham science can add something to them. In those days the sham science was astrology above all;[5] but there was also a doctrine of "sympathy", almost chemical, we might say, between precious stones and precious formulae and the gods to whom they pertained. If the weary round of Stoic cycles and conflagrations lacked meaning at last, and ran to such length as to be almost irrelevant

[1] Inge, *Plotinus*, vol. ii, p. 19.
[2] Plato, *Republic*, ii, 364–365.
[3] Cf. Juvenal vi, 511 ff.
[4] Celsus *ap.* Origen, *c. Celsum*, i, 2.
[5] Juvenal vi, 553.

at such a distance, hell and the wrath of the goddess were more real and came closer to the imagination, undisciplined by reason or by practice in self-government. Sacred foods, sacred phrase, magic, all throve; and their professors and exponents throve. Greece got the idea that she understood Egyptian religion—a delusion according to modern Egyptologists; but, garbled and misunderstood, as it was, it appealed even to educated men, as we can see in the case of Plutarch. Behind it all lay the stimulus of fear, the motive principle of all superstition.

Thus it was in death that this later paganism believed. The older Greece, happy in its sense of power, had emphatically believed in life; but the opportunities of life had been cramped, and the sense of power was gone, and death became the great factor. Had not even Plato called life a "preparation for death"? So we find in literature, and in the society behind it, the familiar accompaniments of belief in death. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may"—Herrick's pretty strain is anticipated in a hundred little poems of the *Anthology*, many far from pretty, poems the motive of which is over-valued if we call it hedonism; it wants a shorter and blunter name. But, if to-morrow we die, let us eat and drink, and take the counsel of Philodemus. Other men, with death before them, went about life in a cannier spirit—

> Since we're in it willy-nilly,
> We maun be tactfu', wise and skilly,
> An' no mind ony ither billie,
> Lassie nor God.

It is easy to play for safety, to stand aside from the

service of the state, from the criticism of officials, from all that involves risk. If the libertine lived long,

> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a hell;

and we have the bitter and savage poems of Palladas. And all these forms of retaliation on death shock the pious and prompt to fresh orgies of devotion and initiation.

If it is true, as it appears, that the decline of democracy, the sense that the state is no private man's concern, left men with no zest in public life, and cramped the faculties, what chance of recovery of manhood was there for men bred for generations in zenanas, by foreign slaves from the Orient? What wonder that again and again the decisive minds of the Empire come from barbarous tribes beyond the northern frontier?

It is curious to trace in Judaism itself movements more or less parallel to those we have seen in heathenism. The Old Testament, as it stands, has hardly more about personal immortality than Homer, if you except four or five outstanding passages, which, I think, scholars suppose to belong to the period after the Babylonian captivity. It is strange indeed that, till he came in contact with the Greek world, the Hebrew took so little interest in immortality. One could have expected it as the natural corollary of Jeremiah's conceptions of God and of human life, and the close relation between God and the soul.

After the period of the great Hebrew writers comes, as in Greece, an age of literary *epigoni*. One or two of these have had the good fortune to have their works

included in the canon. The most singular of them is *Ecclesiastes*, which, Renan said, is the only amiable book written by a Jew. An American scholar has written a bright volume upon the author, whom he calls a gentle cynic.[1] He finds in him a dilettante in philosophy, touched with Greek individualism and interested a little in Greek theories of medicine—a free lance, pessimist, *bon viveur*, scintillating rather than profound, not unkindly to human suffering but little in sympathy with human ambition, of the sort that are never quite happy unless they contradict themselves twice a day. Life this writer decides to be a chasing after wind, and death, so far as anybody can see, one and the same thing for every living creature. The Jewish conception of God had broadened out from the old tribal deity who stood by his clan, and was amenable to their friendly gifts, into the One God of all the world, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. But the author of this book is hardly troubled by the consequent problems, which so greatly perplexed the poet of *Job*. Not at all; he still smiles in his half-ironical way; he does not trouble much with theology or look deeply into life; for, while God has given us the desire to know, he remarks that it is hopeless to fathom the mysteries of existence—

> Just as thou knowest not where goes the Wind,
> Or how the Child grows, in the Womb confined,
> So thou canst never understand the Work
> Of God, who bears the Whole of things in mind.[2]

[1] Morris Jastrow, *A Gentle Cynic*, especially pp. 125, 126, 134, 145, 153, 177, 179, 182, 195.

[2] These stanzas are translated by Professor F. C. Burkitt.

He sees little sense in worship of an unsearchable God —"God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few"; God will do things in His own way; however you pray, you will not change His plans. Dreams have no significance; sacrifices are futile; but you can "go to the house of God to hear".

> Aye, what God wills, that stands for ever fast;
> The Course of things will go on to the last;
> Man cannot add to it, or take away,
> God makes the Future as He made the Past.

Of course it is all toned down with the last chapter, and other touches here and there, whether by pious editors, or by the flippant author to take the edge off his wickedness and under a guise of orthodoxy to secure an audience for the spirit that denies. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" —how virtuous it sounds! and what sort of a Creator has he drawn?

> God lets the Wicked flourish; no doubt He
> Will judge them justly; but it seems to me
> That He has made Men for Experiment
> To try what kind of animals they be.
>
> For one event comes both to Man and Beast;
> There's no distinction when the Breath has ceased;
> As one dies, so the other—Bubbles both,
> And Man nowise superior in the least.
>
> Who knows the Breath of Man is upward bound,
> While the Beast's Breath sinks downward to the Ground?
> Out of the Dust we came, to Dust we go;
> All things return to tread the unchanging Round.

The author blandly ascribes his book to King Solomon and fortifies the attribution by allusions to gardens and gold, to singing men and singing women, to the harem and the mind of woman—"snares and

nets, and her hands are fetters". What he did for his purpose, less ironical persons of piety did for theirs, and we have, as we saw, a whole literature, no page of which is by its reputed author. The object of these pseudonymous Apocalyptic writers is to justify the ways of God to men, to produce a philosophy of History, to explain the past and to encourage men to face the future, before and after death. Consequently their work is prophetic in character, and it is the nature of prophets—unless they be prophets of Baal, fed at the queen's table, with a national issue before them—to disagree. These, however, were not subsidized writers, but earnest individuals, doing each his best to forecast what God might do and how He might do it. They had as a rule the scantiest and most miserable literary endowment; but they used what they had, and they emphasized certain points that needed emphasis. God, they were certain, was not done with Israel, nor had He exhausted His resources; in one way or another, with or without an Anointed, on earth or perhaps in heaven, at His own time, He would vindicate His own; and, in this world or in the next, virtue and loyalty would be rewarded by an Almighty God. Perhaps the dead would rise, restored in their old bodies; or perhaps it would simply be the immortality of the soul; in either case death was not final; there remained another life. This was indeed a great step forward, for the sake of which a great deal of bad writing and clumsy thinking may be forgiven. They had made their point—the question of another life turns upon God, and the God of Israel can be trusted in the matter.

But the Apocalyptic writer was hampered by being nobody—a mere *vox clamantis*. Whatever later days may have supposed, it seems unlikely that any of their works was widely accepted. *Enoch* is a composite book, made up, it would seem, of bits of several books; and even *Daniel* was not abruptly added to the Canon. The verbal message carries no more authority than the man; the anonymous or pseudonymous message is hampered from the start. If the thesis of the Apocalyptic writer were true, it was good news. But was it true? It is clear that a great many worthy people thought so or hoped so; but the nation at last rejected the literature. It was plain, too, that, with its small foothold in Judaism, Apocalyptic could not have the leverage to move the world. Even the greater literature of Israel, in Greek for two hundred years, made little impression upon the cultured classes. Longinus indeed quotes from the legislator of the Jews, "no ordinary person", the sentence "Let there be light; and there was light", as an example of the sublime. But the Greek, ready as he was to adopt the religious teaching of Egypt or Phrygia, seems fundamentally to have disliked the Jew; and across that gulf of prejudice it was hard for Jewish ideas to be effective. We have also to remember that it is easy for one polytheism to fit into another. The Jewish belief in One God cut across Greek thinking at a right angle; and, though there were Hellenistic minds (like Tatian and Justin) who turned to it with deep relief, it was too novel, too revolutionary, for a conservative and proud people. So Jewish ideas—or rather the central ideas of Judaism—had little welcome and little

influence. *Tricesima Sabbata palles?* Pretty and foreign observances, like Sabbath keeping, might appeal to idle minds who liked little bits of self-conscious piety. Judaism was an alien philosophy, hard and Puritanic in its rejection of idols and altars, and, by implication, of Greek literature. Who could stand at once by Homer and the decalogue?

So Paul appears before the Areopagus, a member of the most consciously foreign race on earth; and, an unknown stranger himself, he very quickly tells this Athenian audience that another unknown stranger, with a Semitic name offensive to refined ears—rose from the dead! There was not in the world an audience more cultured or more academic—more modern, we might say. Curious to hear the last new thing, as the foreigner Luke (an Antiochene or a Macedonian) satirically tells us, these middle-class people with their common sense and their conventional education—to say nothing of the academic flavour of their thinking—dismiss Paul as next thing to a lunatic, very naturally and not improperly. If so violent a contradiction of human experience is to be preached, it is of little avail for a total stranger to talk about it to educated foreigners.

We are sometimes told that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians "we determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified", he was admitting that his approach to his audience in Athens had been wrong. It is hard to see this. The Gospel was a challenge of the abruptest kind, and if Paul manoeuvred a little for position, if he began on common ground in the hope of getting an initial hearing, he

was right, as the event proved. The general audience broke up in derision, but he had made some impression of sincerity on certain persons among them. That was the real opening—the personal contact; and in Corinth we read that he stayed for towards two years, and his contacts with men there became very intimate. It is obvious that the Gospel did not, in those early days, rest upon a written message. In spite of the stories, no doubt true, that we often hear of the influence of the book without a teacher, it is also true that behind the book is some broad awareness of a whole Christian world. So much is implied in the printed page, more significant here than manuscript. In that world there was not even manuscript; the message depended on the messenger.

The real conviction of the living Christ was not carried to the world by a book nor by a story. Men might allege they had seen the risen Lord; that was nothing till they themselves were known. The witness of the resurrection was not the word of Paul (as we see at Athens) nor of the eleven; it was the new power in life and death that the world saw in changed men.

That I may not seem to theorize too much, let me take a definite case of conversion, a typical one, as I think. Tertullian was a pagan, a lawyer, a man of letters with a strong infusion of Stoic teaching. Born and bred a pagan, he was far from studying the Scriptures—"nobody comes to them unless he is already a Christian".[1] Those Scriptures were indeed given by God to tell men of eternal life and eternal

[1] Tertullian, *de Testim. Animae*, 1.

death—and he laughed at them; "I am one of yourselves", he said.[1] But, though a man be born and bred a pagan, "there is still good innate in the soul, the archetypal good, divine and germane, essentially natural; for what comes from God is not so much extinguished as overshadowed".[2] If he, like others, would not look at the Scriptures, what of that? "It was not the pen of Moses that initiated the knowledge of God.... The vast majority of mankind never heard the name of Moses—to say nothing of Moses' book; but none the less they know the God of Moses."[3] There is in every man an instinctive fear of God which Nature has set in the soul.[4] The soul, in a word, is "in its very nature and essence Christian". A grown man, well read and well trained, but with a conscience stained by life in the world, it appears he was in the amphitheatre one day when Christians were martyred. One or two short passages will tell the story. "Every man", he writes, "who witnesses this great endurance, is struck with some misgiving. He is set on fire to look into it to find the cause of it. When he has learnt the truth, at once he follows it himself."[5] "No one would have wished to be killed, if he had not been in possession of the truth."[6] "The very obstinacy [remember Marcus Aurelius used this word] with which you taunt us, is your teacher. Who is not stirred by the contemplation of it to find out what there really is in the thing? Who, when he has found out, does not draw near? and then, when he has

[1] *Apology*, 18.
[2] *de Anima*, 41.
[3] *adv. Marcion*, i, 10.
[4] *de Testim. Animae*, 2.
[5] *ad Scapulam*, 5.
[6] *Scorpiace*, 8.

drawn near, desire to suffer?"[1] Men and women—even slave-girls, for it was the new spirit, the Socratic courage and calm of the slave-girl, by sex and condition depressed below the human level, that impressed the observer—who or what made them capable of such moral grandeur? Who or what set them free from the universal fear of death, disentangled and liberated so gloriously the "archetypal good, divine and germane", in them? And, not to make a long story, who or what transformed their ordinary lives, and gave them a wholly new chastity, honesty, kindliness, a real integrity of character?

It was the life and death of Christians that compelled attention, their victory over fear, their faith in a living Saviour. The legend of a reputed resurrection of some unknown person in Palestine nobody needed to consider; but what were you to do with the people who died in the arena, the re-born slaves with their newness of life in your own house? And when you "looked into the story", it was no mere somebody or other of whom they told it. The conviction of the people you knew, amazing in its power of transforming character and winning first the goodwill and the trust and then the conversion of others, was supported and confirmed by the nature and personality of the Man of whom they spoke, of whom you read in their books. "Never man spake like this man", you read, nor thought like this man, nor like this man believed in God. I cannot but think that the factors that make a man Christian to-day were those that won the world then. Our age and that age, in culture, in

[1] *Apology*, 50.

hopes and fears, in loss of nerve, are not unlike. Belief in immortality for us does not depend on a story, however well attested, in an ancient book; and for them it was a very modern book; and, if you read it in Latin, every line of it jarred, as illiterate a piece of cobbled translation as you could find.[1] No, here was a sequence of great character and emancipated spirit, all attached to and explained by such a personality as the world never saw; and the central doctrine of the risen Christ squared with the rationality and the goodness of God. Nothing was left out. Christ had chosen to suffer and to die. The wise said that God and the godlike could have no contact with suffering, but Jesus was no phantom feigning to be crucified; he truly suffered on the cross, he truly rose. Suffering is a language all can understand and none can quite exhaust; and the suffering Christ, victorious over pain and death, meant for all who grasped his significance a new faith in God, a new freedom of mind in God.

The Gospels too differ very significantly from other religious documents. The clarity of the mind of Jesus has been insufficiently studied. Ancient books, Christian and pagan, conjecture a great deal about the other world, a little about heaven, a great deal about hell, which is easier to imagine and to describe. Jesus said practically nothing about either. Other men argued for immortality, hoping to convince themselves. Jesus never argued about it, and hardly spoke of it; he assumed it, as a natural consequence that followed from the God he knew. The philosophic

[1] Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, iii, 5, 9.

and the pious arguing and guessing, and getting entangled in doubt and priestcraft and superstition—Jesus as ever drove straight for the centre. If you stand with him in his conception of God, the rest follows. It may be resurrection of the flesh in some shape, as Jews supposed, or immortality of the soul, as Greeks preferred—as long as the God of Jesus is real, you are real too, and as long as one lasts the other will, each for the other and in the other. To this day I see no other way of it.

Then see the freedom it gave! The peace of mind, that the world never knew, never could learn in the Porch of Zeno or the cave of Trophonius, Christ made natural and assured for his own. The problem was settled; the bringing in of a better hope transformed life to a new worth, a new reality. Beyond lay no Homeric region of shades, no uneasy Pythagorean series of transmigrations, no weary Stoic cycle—no, but fulness of life with Christ. It was worth martyrdom; it was worth the new life on earth—no, it made newness of life, it deepened the value of the ordinary and made the development of character happy and instinctive. Where the spirit of the Lord was, there was Liberty.

VI

GOD

Almost from the beginning we can watch men of the ancient world moving toward the great central question of all—does the belief in gods answer to anything real or relevant? All life, in spite of the practical people, is based upon theory: the ultimate belief of a man affects, sooner or later, every judgment that he makes, every decision, every action. Even in Homer we can see that morals and men's attitude to the gods were already related. Zeus does not himself punish Aegisthus for adultery and murder, but he warns him that he will not go unpunished. "The blessed gods love not wicked deeds." Storms and floods are let loose by Zeus in anger on men who give crooked judgments. To illtreat a guest is to sin against God.[1] But, as we have seen, the Homeric gods were not always on their best behaviour as individuals. Perhaps all that Homer means, if we could cross-examine him, is that broadly speaking life is just; that whatsoever a man soweth, he has at least a fair chance of reaping; that this depends on higher powers than man controls—perhaps those vague figures that a later age might call Fates or Laws, about which Homer's gods speak but dimly.

With the progress of Greek thinking the question is put more and more earnestly and answered with

[1] *Odyssey*, i, 37; xiv, 83; *Iliad*, xvi, 387; *Odyssey*, xiv, 402.

more variety. One sure accompaniment of advance in religious thought is revolt from tradition and refusal to accept either the old or the new ideas. Greeks, and after them Romans, transcended traditional conceptions of the divine, rejected the divine altogether or lapsed back into the crudest beliefs that they inherited or could borrow, or definitely moved forward with conviction. These movements of thought are found at all periods; beliefs are never stationary among an intelligent people, nor even among the semi-intelligent. Yet several epochs stand out; to a certain point a chronological grouping is possible, and it can be helpful.

First of all, then, we have the great period of Greek genius, of what the Germans call *Aufklärung*, illumination, reaching from Heraclitus and Xenophanes to Plato. A second great era begins with the world-conquests of Alexander the Great. Later again, with no very clear date for its commencement, we have the age when the Orient is the dominant influence in the religious thought of the West.

There is always a temptation to linger over the Great Age of Greece, but we must resist it for the present. Let it suffice to recall that, as James Adam put it, Euripides "asks all the questions", that the poet of human suffering is also a profound thinker and will have evidence and reason for everything. But evidence and reason, as he learnt, and as he says, with sadness, are not so easy to find.

"Surely", sings one of his choruses,[1] "surely with power do the thoughts of the gods, when they come into my heart, take

[1] Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 1103 f.

away sorrow; but—[and here you must forgive my bald and prosaic literalism in translation which is this time intentional]—but, cloaking some understanding with hope, I faint (I am left) as I look on the chances that fall to men and the deeds they do; it is confusion, all of it; and life passes away for men, full of wandering and change for ever."

He cannot make motive and event and divine justice hang together. No, as Xenophanes said before him, "guesswork is over all". More cryptically but shrewdly Heraclitus suggested that "a hidden cause is better than an obvious one"; the true rationality of life is not on the surface. Plato tried to solve the problem by suggesting that the mistakes are twofold —men go wrong, through accepting the traditional, the Homeric gods, as they stand, and by refusing to see that there must be some eternity of the soul, with life beyond the grave. There is a certain ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy;[1] and much as he loves Homer, with a reverence that began in boyhood, he will not have Homer in his ideal Republic nor anyone else who speaks of the gods otherwise than as they are.

The conquest of the world by Alexander altered the range of experience on the basis of which Greeks had thought. Of course from the beginning men had speculated upon the world of which they heard; but in our own lives we know the difference it makes to have seen the Indian Ocean and the Pacific with one's own eyes. Alexander, so to put it, swept Greeks outside all known geography. A vast world, which, indeed, they had been told did exist somewhere or other, he made real to them, a vaster world and far

[1] Plato, *Republic*, x, 607 B.

more various than they had dreamed, and from his day onward everybody's world from Gades to Taxila. The Cambridge Persian scholar, who spoke of some one as "the biggest fool on this side of the Oxus", amused his colleagues. People in England do not often think of the Oxus. But once sail down the Indus, and you will think of the Indus; and by contrast the Cephissus looks very different. And so do the old gods of Greece. You may be a good citizen of Sicyon, but on the Satlej, Adrastus seems a long way off, and your Athenian friend will say the same of Athene. The unity of the world in Empire or geography means the unity of the world in religion, somehow; parochial gods look too like parochial *demarchs*; you want something more universal. Further, the reduction of the world and its cities to one plane of subjection, the disappearance of any true political life, will alter all men's thoughts as to conduct, and thence as to morality and God. And so it fell.

Of the reaction of the Orient one wearies of speaking. Syrian vagrants, Chaldaean astrologers, *metragyrtai*, peddlers of initiations and lucky days and sacred stones—the slave-woman on the verandah like a negro mammy giving the Greek or Roman child a background of myth as strange to Cincinnatus as to Plato—the waking of the sense of insufficiency, terror of the unknown, and the craving for strange and more potent gods with a range beyond the daemons that infest death—all these made a new epoch with outlooks that were neither Greek nor Roman, though the older myths of Greece and Rome held the door open for them.

Such are our main epochs, and from one end of them to the other men are trying different approaches to the problem of God. You can stand by tradition, in which case it will be as well for you to know it. "Who", then, asks Augustine, "sought it all out with more care than Marcus Varro, or brought more learning to the finding of it?" Varro said he was afraid the gods would perish, not by any enemy's incursion, but by the carelessness of the citizens, and he compared his own services to the gods with those of Marcellus who rescued the holy things of Vesta from the flames, or of Aeneas saving the Penates from the sack of Troy.[1] Varro, in fact, saved a good deal more than pious people like Virgil's commentator, Servius, thanked him for; a lot of it they would have preferred to forget.[2] It gave too many handles to the enemies of religion, and too much to its friends to explain. But Pausanias, in going round Greece, found a great deal that was odd and quaint in local survivals, and his rather commonplace piety found no difficulty in it.

On the other hand more rationalist minds dealt in other ways with old religion. The Stoics turned the gods into various natural objects—Ceres into wheat, and so on; which did not leave them very divine. Or, like the Stoic teacher of Justin Martyr, they said they did not know very much about God, but that it did not matter. Or they let the gods melt with the universe, like so much wax in the general conflagration. Euhemerus, in a famous romance, explained

[1] Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, vi, 2.
[2] Servius on *Aeneid*, xi, 785, *Varro ubique expugnator religionis*.

that historically the gods had all been men, a theory of more use to a wicked Tertullian than to a pious idolator. Even the Epicurean was more respectful than such people; for he conceded the existence of gods, though he gave them a sort of universe to themselves and made them irrelevant to us and our doings and sufferings. Plato's kinsman Critias—we are not here very chronological, but it does not matter—Critias wrote a poem, in which he explained, that, when the earliest legislators managed to keep men from open misdeeds, but not from a lot of secret mischief, "some shrewd fellow invented a terror for the evildoer and introduced the divine who (or which) will hear all said among men; and though in silence thou plan some evil, yet this shall not escape the gods": a very pleasant contrivance it was, "with a false reason cloaking truth", to "quench lawlessness with laws".[1] Polybius, in a very interesting chapter on Roman religion, clearly leans to the same view. In a community of philosophers you would not need all the scenic effects and scrupulous detail of Roman religion, but a good solid belief in hell is useful for the masses.[2] He had so much evidence for his view, that he found with decay of belief in the old Roman religion a simultaneous decline in national honesty.[3]

In addition to antiquaries and philosophers of this stamp, we find more serious people who really tried to get a hold of the evidence for the existence of the gods, to weigh it, and to form their judgments upon

[1] Quoted by Sextus Empiricus, *adv. Math.* ix, 54.
[2] Polybius vi, 56.
[3] Polybius xviii, 35.

what they found. Foremost among them, though not everybody will agree with us, we may set Herodotus. It is an old story in criticism that his credulity is unbounded where gods or miracles are concerned, yet Professor Bury has discovered that he was more ironical than most readers would have guessed, and that "the contrast of the naïveté of Herodotus with his scepticism imparts to his epic a very piquant quality".[1] I have elsewhere given my reasons for believing that standing on the borderline between two outlooks, he wavered in decision, but was anxious to use in the most candid way all available evidence. His language has an epic simplicity that covers great shrewdness, patent to the careful reader; and the more careful he is, the more highly will he rate the honesty of Herodotus, and his genuine interest in the gods.

Of Plato something has already been said in the last chapter. It must suffice here to say that the impetus he gave to all souls who combine piety and honesty has never died, and that Christianity itself has adopted forms of language and dogma that it could never have known, if its early interpreters had not been steeped in Plato. But mankind, if it gains boundlessly from its greatest men, pays for their mistakes. It would be hard to estimate the trouble made through centuries of Christian church life by a phrase into which the author of the Fourth Gospel re-cast the thought of our Lord. Plato's star gods, and other things that he threw out in myth and argument, were taken too seriously, too much at the foot of the letter, and gave

[1] *Ancient Greek Historians*, pp. 49, 60.

countenance to men who had nothing of his genius and little of his spirit but fortified themselves with his name.

Before the Christian era the movement had begun which culminated in Neo-Platonism. Maximus of Tyre held that, if a new race were in question, it would be better to recommend them not to worship images; but, as images of the gods exist, it is better to keep them—men, as it is, cannot do without them in view of the feebleness of human intelligence.[1] Plotinus taught that, in virtue of the principle of sympathy, the divine powers will communicate more easily with men by the mediation of statues, because their form corresponds with the idea of the power or god whom they represent. Plutarch defended the image of Osiris, which a European would call obscene and a Hindu would not, on the ground that it represented creative divinity.[2] Myth Plutarch prettily described as "a rainbow to the sun of truth"—which means what you like. Where the sacred story was indefensible, it was no doubt the work of bad daemons, he taught, or it meant something quite different and very beautiful. There are always good reasons to be found for whatever you prefer. The gods themselves were re-interpreted. Plutarch would have nothing to do with Stoic transformation of gods into barley and water and so forth; but etymologically, he points out, Apollo means the Not-Many, i.e. the One (Ἀ-πολλ-ων), and Isis knowledge (εἰδέναι). In Plotinus the real

[1] Maximus Tyr. viii, 9 and 2; Réville, *La Religion sous les Sévères*, p. 172.

[2] Plotinus, *Ennead* iv, 3, 11.

gods are not Zeus, Athene and Apollo, but the One, Spirit, and the Soul of the World.[1] So it is with modern Hinduism, as it was explained to me by a Brahman in the Madura temple.

The plain comment is in the sentence of John Stuart Mill—"there is no philosophy possible where fear of consequences is a stronger principle than love of truth". Here the fear is plain. "Pemptides", says Plutarch's father, "you are discussing what should not be discussed at all, when you question the opinion we hold about the gods and ask reason and demonstration for everything.... If you demand proof about each of the ancient gods and bring your sophistry to play on every altar, you will leave nothing free from quibble and cross-examination." Men were "in anguish and fear", Plutarch says, "lest Delphi should lose its glory of three thousand years". The sources of the fear we can see—in the rationalist movement, in the need to safeguard morality, and in the horror of a blank world like the Stoic's with no rest for the tender heart. So the old religion was to be kept at all costs; and how strange it could be you are more likely to learn from honest antiquaries like Pausanias than from the philosophers. Philosophic religion, as in India to-day, was not quite the faith of the common man.

Before we leave the old religion, we may do well to recall the worship of the Emperor—to moderns a revolting form of flattery. But this is an inadequate judgment. For polytheists there are always degrees in godhead, which a monotheist finds it hard to grasp.

[1] Inge, *Plotinus*, vol. ii, p. 193.

To the student of contemporary belief in daemons the matter grows clearer. A soul and a daemon were much the same thing, one in a body, the other for the time not in a body. A great hero is probably an incarnate daemon; and if Pollux and Hercules are half divine, why not Augustus? The world had been civilized by demi-gods, why should he not be a demi-god who saves the world from a "return to barbarism"? A modern Roman Catholic can argue that, if God did miracles through St Paul, He could do them through Henry VI; no doubt, but did He? A conclusion, which it is impossible to verify, hardly helps knowledge. Still with all this lore of daemon and hero, an Emperor might well be a god; the successors of Alexander had been treated as gods with really less excuse. If Tiberius and Vespasian were doubtful of their own godhead, Gaius was not. But whether the scepticism of Tiberius or the deity of Gaius did more to harm religion, we need not wait to discuss. It is, however, of interest to note that a reasoned defence has lately been issued by an educated Japanese, Dr Genchi Kato, for the worship of the Japanese Emperor —the fundamental principle of Japan is the Emperor's divinity, the worship of him is a real religion, a theanthropic national cult, which will not disappear, because it is rich in moral content and able to absorb and subordinate other religions.[1] This goes, or appears to go, further than any defence that survives of the Roman Emperor worship.

But Emperor worship was not quite in the centre;

[1] See *International Review of Missions*, July 1920 (vol. ix, No. 25), p. 343.

that position was held in turn by one or other of the great gods or goddesses whose religion included mysteries and initiations—by Cybele first, then Isis, and from the third century A.D. by Mithras. As Réville says, the abdication of reason ensured more than ever the prestige of mystery, and we may add, of fear; and then, conversely, intelligence and enterprise and all the great human qualities still further declined.

To sum up, as far as we can, the general movement of Greek religion, it has been toward some kind of monotheism, or at least of monism, toward a single God behind and beyond all other gods, who may be partial manifestations of Him. But thinkers remained doubtful if this One were personal; of His or Its righteousness they were more readily convinced, but He or It was very far from being within the reach of ordinary men. Knowledge of the Maker and Father of this All, as Plato said in a phrase they loved to quote, was difficult to attain and impossible to hand on to all men.[1] The Greek had always a strong sense of his own individuality, and as the state declined and the political virtues yielded place to those of chastity, courtesy and kindliness, all of which rest upon and imply a sense of personality, he was not less conscious of himself but more. Hitherto the state had been behind him and beneath him, a happier support than the cosmos which was all he had now. The result was a heightening of the age-long demand for personality in God to answer to human personality and to support it, till at last Greeks themselves were

[1] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28 C.

ready to sacrifice for it the unity of God and almost His righteousness. The palliation of everything in myth and the over-emphasis on safety at the cost of intelligence meant nothing else. The Stoics and Epicureans had over-driven them one way; the reaction in the other direction, as fear and isolation and inactivity sapped character, was immense. The only thing that could rescue character and religion at the same time was a faith of the daylight, with a reasonable philosophy, a religion that had but One God, and that God personal and righteous and available for the individual man, for whom life without personality in God was intolerable.

When one reflects to how great an extent Judaism met all these requirements, and when, further, one turns again to the prophets and psalmists of Israel, and thinks of the faith in which the apostles and St Paul—and Jesus himself—were nurtured, it becomes more and more strange that Judaism was so little effective in the world. Why has Islam been so triumphant, while Judaism, a higher faith surely, has been so sterile? The most obvious answer will not serve; the sword is not the reason. Hellenistic Judaism was a movement of real promise; but with all its proselytes (let me quote Mr Norman Bentwich[1] so far) it dwindled in importance—"estranged from the main body of Jews by their neglect of Hebrew, and rent by heresy and faction, their reduced numbers were little by little won over to gnostic and Christian ideas". Alexandria "once the most productive centre of Hellenistic-Jewish literature gave not a single Jewish

[1] Bentwich, *Hellenism*, p. 301.

record to the world after the second century". With the rise of the Christian church, "proselytism became a peril and a source of evil to the Jew. Henceforth all attempts at proselytism were deprecated and discouraged".[1] Further, a definite campaign was launched against Greek books and Greek ideas; a fast day was appointed to mark the calamity which the Septuagint translation was now reckoned to be.[2] "The Judaism which has come down through the centuries is essentially Pharisaism."[3] A resolute attempt has been made of late years to re-interpret the Pharisees. To do so, Mr Herford has to weaken the right of Jesus to have an opinion upon them, and he does not shirk the issue. Jesus, he would have us believe, "did not know Pharisaism from within, nor apparently ever try to understand it"; and further, "the more the alleged spiritual depravity of the Pharisees be emphasized, the more striking is the absence of any slightest attempt to lead them into a better way on the part of one who 'came to seek and to save that which is lost'". Sometimes a single sentence will sufficiently exhibit an author's capacity for judging character or writing history.

Turning then abruptly to the new force among mankind, we have to note that it is as ever personal. A teacher appears—for whom no one was prepared, and whom no one could have expected. The argument from prophecy, on which the early apologists laid so much weight, was all *ex post facto*. No one beforehand

[1] K. Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, p. 421.
[2] Bentwich, *op. cit.* p. 289.
[3] R. T. Herford, *The Pharisees*, p. 52.

could have conjectured a tenth of it. But without the background of Jewish prophet and psalmist, of Jewish national history, it would be hard to understand Jesus. If prophet and historian and legislator did not in type and enigma foretell in detail the story of his life, he was none the less their heir. None the less was he their heir that he was not in bondage to his inheritance, but, if St Paul's phrase may be borrowed, a "minister not of the letter but of the spirit", and the whole of his activity lay "in newness of spirit". Without conjecturing what he might have been on another soil or of another stock—a type of guesswork always futile in history—we have to recognize the immense spiritual wealth that lay ready to his hand. Centuries of painful training had brought Israel to a firm belief in One God, a personal God, a God of righteousness, and a God who recognized the individual. But that does not explain Jesus; it was also, if they had cared to avail themselves of it, the background of Caiaphas and James. A good inheritance is essential for genius, men agree; and the Church has always believed that it did not come to Jesus by accident. But far more significant than any man's inheritance is the use he makes of it, the personality that he brings to bear on it. For a little, let us abdicate the theologian, and play the historian, and try to begin where the first disciples began.

Jesus then was obviously a teacher and I am inclined to think that few can realize, as professional teachers may, how great was his achievement as a teacher. "Who", we heard Marcus Aurelius plaintively ask, "who can alter one of their *dogmata*?" That is

always the teacher's work; I have heard the first function of a university defined as to break up men's dogmatism and to put them at a universal point of view. I know no better account of it, but it is not always achieved. Life hardens men in their opinions, when it leaves them retentive of any. Men find what they expect, and their habitual thoughts, fancies and mental pictures (in the telling phrase of Marcus Aurelius) dye their minds; and such dyes, all the moralists will tell you, are fast and ineradicable. Even children and boys at school have their fixed ideas. The first task of a teacher is to get his listeners to attend to him at all, with more than the attention that the ears automatically enforce. When attention is aroused and riveted, he has to seize the golden moment and "put his stuff across", if possible in such a way that the idea will not at once drop out. Plato suggested that ideas are like the statues of Daedalus, which would leave their pedestals and get away unless firmly nailed down; and the best nails to fix ideas, he suggested, were reasons, though he knew (and none better) that a phrase with a hook on it has a way of sticking. But all this is means to an end. The great Novalis, if I remember aright, said that *philosophiren heisst dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren*— philosophy's task is to drive out the nonchalance and to quicken into life. Cicero preserves a saying of Socrates, that the main business of the teacher is to plant the seed, and then he can let it alone. Several parables of Jesus have the same simile.

In all these arts of the teacher Jesus is incomparable. He roused attention and very wide attention, but he

did better than that. To keep attention the teacher has to wake affection, and it is plain that the warmest affection bound his disciples to Jesus and opened their minds to him. He had the gift of saying things that people could not forget. We are lightly told that the use of parable is an ordinary Oriental habit; perhaps it is—Abraham Lincoln had it however, and the Orientals about Jesus complained that they could not understand him, and even his friends had to ask him to explain himself. Such criticisms and requests are evidence that his talk "intrigued" them, if you will forgive a modern vulgarism. He told a story amazingly well, cutting away all but the essential and giving that much absolutely alive. Take for instance two verses of *Ecclesiasticus*,[1] good, honest moralizing talk. "There is that waxeth rich by his wariness and pinching, and this is the portion of his reward. When he saith, I have found rest, and now will I eat of my goods; yet he knoweth not what time shall pass, and he shall leave them to others and die." Jesus takes this and dramatizes it, and you see a right good fellow, no screw like the other, but a man blest by God in the fertility of his land and his general prosperity. You overhear him deliberating, which takes you a good deal further into his heart than the other man's commonplace proposal to eat and rest. Suddenly you see him start and quickly turn to a tap on the shoulder—it is God face to face with him, God whom he had somehow forgotten, and whom we for the moment had not remembered, God putting the most tremendous question.

[1] *Ecclesiasticus*, xi, 18, 19.

It is more than a mere illustration of Jesus' methods, though the methods of such a teacher show his mind. Style is thought; a man's style is an index to his thinking. It was so that Jesus thought and we do not. We forget God—Jesus did not; and for him God is alive, always near with a question or a blessing or both. The story lives because Jesus had his eyes on the living God, an actor in every man's drama. You cannot forget a story that Jesus tells. If we may develop Socrates' simile, the seeds of Jesus, like some of which botanists tell us, are hooked, and you cannot shake them off. Jesus moreover had no doubt about the fertility of seed. To people who despaired of God, who could not believe that God could or would do anything, who gave up work because they had given up faith and hope with it, Jesus came with the assurance that God can be trusted, that the tragedy of life came because no one trusted God enough, that work in God lives, that God's seed in God's field brings forth sixty-fold. Whatever be true of ages when slowing down and loss of nerve prevail, whenever men take Jesus seriously, the old seed has been as full of life as ever; and, in essence, the seed is Jesus' vivifying knowledge of the reality of God.

Dephlegmatisiren—the old world was doing its thinking by routine, it had no freshness. It is of little use to reproach a world or a man for being half-hearted who has a broken heart. No one can put his mind to thought or work, with a broken spirit. That, as we have seen, was the matter with the world; its hopes had fallen, its activities miscarried, it had lost the sense of youth and morning,

it had lost faith. In his most famous hymn Isaac Watts, in its first draft, took a phrase of St Paul's and added a striking adjective to it—a heightening and vivifying of the idea, which it is a pity he changed—

> When I survey the wondrous Cross
> Where the young Prince of Glory died.

The early Church was well inspired when it took the prophecy of the Suffering Servant, and with that and with its own experience of Jesus filled out the conception of the Messiah. But we can defocus the suffering and lose the Master in one phase of himself; and Watts' adjective is a reminder and a challenge. Wesley asked how "the coarse old Gospel" would do in a fine bright new chapel. His light irony may remind us that the New Testament was new, and the new song and the new creation not less new. Jesus was a young man, when he was crucified; and his Gospel is new and young, fresh and freshening, full of ardour and energy. "I am come that they might have vitality and overflow with it." "Because I live, you shall live also." We lose sight of the immense life and vitality that made Jesus. His freshness and some of his charm are lost for us in old acquaintance; we take him for granted. That was the curse of the ancient world; it had exhausted all experiences; it took things for granted, and put up with them; it was dull and all dulness leads to compromise. Jesus *dephlegmatized* his followers, fired them with his own originality, and inspired them with so independent a spirit, with so moving a sense of a living God beside them and before them, that, over the head of their own traditions of God, they accepted the hint of

Jesus to re-think God; and the next thing was that they were quickly ready for Paul's interpretation of Jesus. That these men could face, and face joyfully, so startling a development of their Gospel and their mission, so broad an expansion of their conception of God and God's goodness, is surely evidence of a new temper, a new turn for fresh ideas, essentially a new capacity for believing more and more of God. It is not so that we expect to find disciples act; their rôle is to stereotype the teacher and very often to make him look more conventional and more commonplace than he could have been, dull men remodelling genius into dulness and safety. The opposite, if you eliminate St James' "epistle of straw", is the note of the New Testament. The originality, the force of Jesus emancipated his followers, and gave them a new instinct to expect of God exceeding abundantly more than they had ever asked or thought.

In the centre of all Jesus' teaching is God. We are the children of ages of Christian theology. Our theology to-day still owes a great deal to Jesus, but it is not all his. That was to be expected. It takes a long time for a new teacher to make over all our ideas, and the class keeps filling up with recruits. Paul was more Jewish than Jesus was. All his freedom from old tradition he owed to Jesus, but he brought into our theology Jewish elements; Tertullian brought in Stoicism, Cyprian Roman law, the Alexandrines an abundant Platonism, our Northern ancestors dashes of primaeval paganism and gradually hints of British commercialism. Ordinary evangelicalism has far more alien features in it than you might readily guess

without a Classical education. I say so much, in order to ask a question. Can you take your own conception of God, and, by hard thinking and perhaps as hard reading, eliminate from it everything that is not directly the teaching of Jesus? I do not say that this is a necessary process; I have already implied that there are legitimate developments which thought and life bring out; I admit that Platonic elements, for instance, in our theology may have a proper place there. But, without some such process of self-examination and fresh study, without some effort at effectual thinking, it is impossible to realize how Jesus conceived of God, and how fresh, how alive and original his conception was or what an impulse it gave to mankind. For in our own effective conception of God, all that really lives comes from Jesus. I do not enlarge here; but, bearing in mind the exhaustion, the loss of nerve, and the broad want of faith that we find in the Roman world, one may after such a process of examination realize anew the re-invigoration and the vitalization that came from contact with one so entirely alive and with his conception of a God, Who was at once seen to be essentially like himself, and Who, in accord with the old instinct to re-interpret God out of our experience, was more and more conceived in the character of Jesus.

If one may attempt judgments that require a very close attention to Christian history, it is in the periods when the borrowed elements in Christian theology have prevailed over the new interpretation of God in Christ, that the Church has signally lost in spiritual power. When it became an order, modelling itself on

the Roman Empire, when it took to borrowing dogmata from the old philosophic schools, when it re-conceived its rites and sacraments, consciously or (it is more probable) half consciously adjusting them to ideas learnt elsewhere in pagan cults, it lost that freedom of mind, that initiative, that turn for exploration, that real belief in God, which Jesus gave to men, and it approximated to the nervelessness that we see in the contemporary world. Yet even so it seems never quite to lose the touch of the Master. "A national character may be best exemplified in its rebels", writes Dean Inge, "a religion in its heretics." Whether one group of heretics or another has been wrong or right in its special contention, heresy—or, in kinder words, openness to new thoughts of God—is in one sense the article of a standing or a moving church, a sign of life; and the church is most usually the gainer amid the clash of living minds. Out of all the clashing, the conviction grew stronger that God is best to be known in Christ, above all in Christ on the Cross, that, as the Cross is the revelation of Christ, so is it of God, of God's love and God's life. "God was in Christ", says Paul, "reconciling the world"—no! something bigger than that—"the cosmos to Himself", and he means as ever the crucified Christ, the risen Christ, the Christ of life.

In Christ a new life came to the world; and, as that life stirred within it, the world turned to God, as it found Him in Christ. It was indeed new life. "I came not to destroy but to develop", said Jesus. He spoke of law and prophets, but his word may be taken with a wider scope. If Clement was right in

saying that philosophy did for the Greeks what the Law did for the Jews, that it brought them to the school of Christ, then are we not justified in saying that all the real achievement of both races, of all races, is Godward? that whether we look at social life, at the human mind, at character and its ideals, at the reality of life as opposed to death, at the conceptions men form of God, the touch of Christ has meant not the negation of truth attained, the rejection of man's gains and gifts, but the acceptance of them, the breaking down of the barrier of stoppage, the fuller and richer development of all? The barrier that halted ancient progress was in the human mind, in the broken heart, and Christ came and gave the world fresh heart, fresh faith in God, new life, a larger freedom. So I believe; and I cannot put it better than St Paul. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." In the struggle for freedom and for life, be it in society, character or thought, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

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